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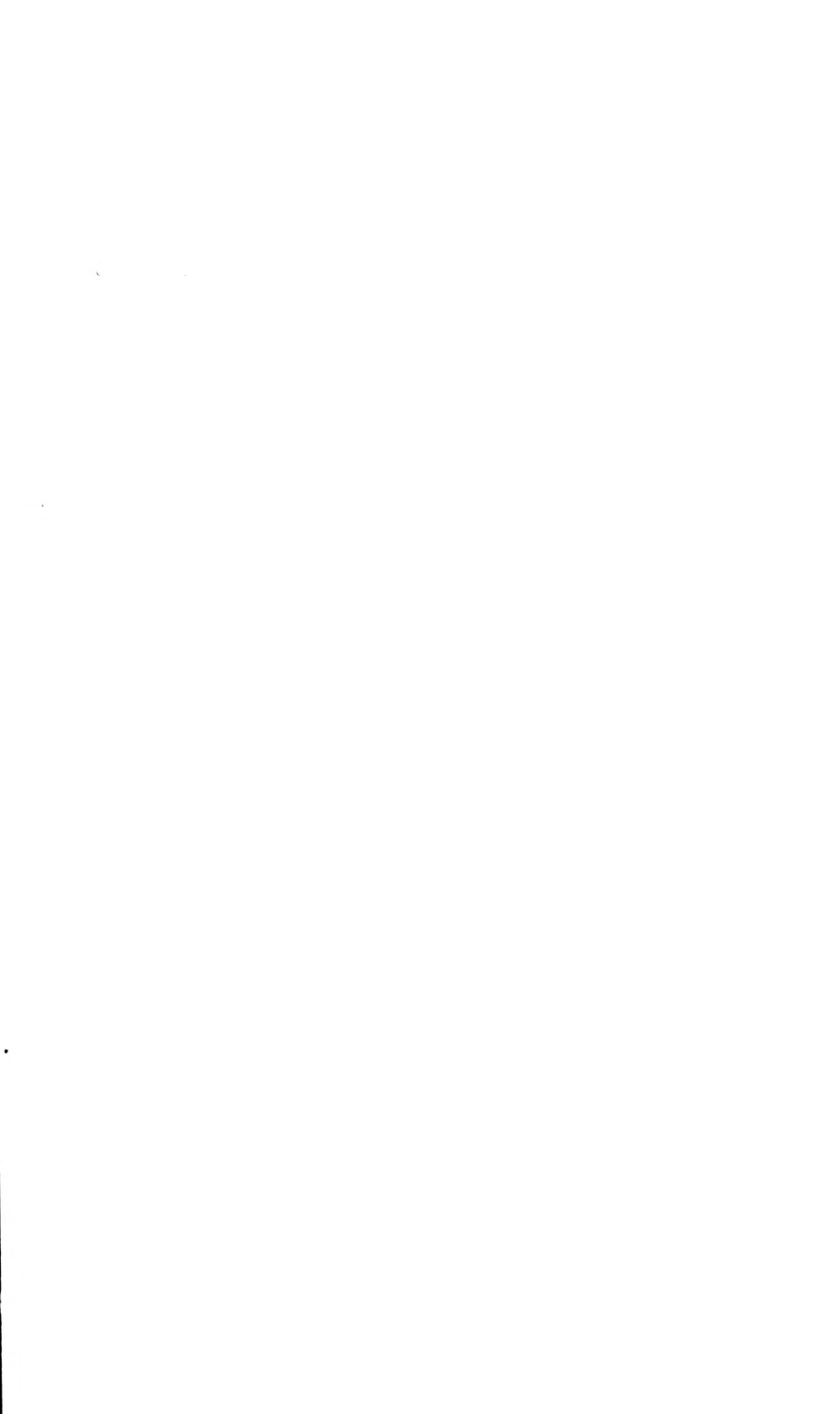
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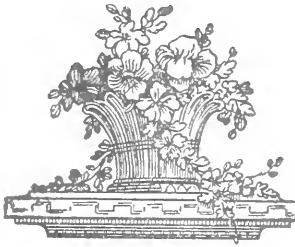




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Pascal's Pensées
or, Thoughts on
Religion

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Introductory Note

BLAISE PASCAL was born in 1623 in Clermont, France; and died in 1662, at thirty-nine. His father was a government official of superior rank and talents, and acted as his son's teacher.

His pupil was amazingly precocious. It is said that the father, fearing the study of mathematics might engross the boy's mind too much, kept all mathematical books out of his reach; but that the boy, tantalized by the forbidden subject, and learning something of what it was all about, worked out geometry for himself as far as the 32nd proposition of Euclid's second book—at the age of twelve!

However true this story may be for Pascal at twelve, we do know for a certainty that at sixteen or seventeen he had written a work on conic sections, and by eighteen had invented the first calculating machine. By nineteen, as a result of overwork in carrying out the making of this machine, his health broke down and forced his abandonment of further intellectual concentration at such white heat.

For eleven or twelve years thereafter Pascal lived a life of pleasure and society, with science neither neglected nor predominant. During this period, just before his celebrated experiments in 1646 with atmospheric pressure, his entire family came under the influence of two members of the Jansenist school of the Church. The Jansenists believed in absolute predestination, in the complete sinfulness of man's nature, in redemption only through the action of divine grace, and in the necessity of complete unreasoning faith. Pascal's younger sister wished to be, and finally became, a member of the Jansenist community at Port-Royal in Paris, and Blaise himself, partly through her influence, and partly for more personal reasons, came further and further under the magnetism of their rigorous mystical doctrine.

His reading of Montaigne and Epictetus had left him unsatisfied in philosophy; his weakness of body concen-



trated his emphasis on the spirit; his natural intensity made his "conversion" all the more violent. In 1653 or 1654, urged on by a seemingly-miraculous cure of a relative, and by a nearly-fatal accident to himself, Pascal became a regular visitor to the Port-Royal community. Although he never formally became a member of the order, he conducted himself like a member, working with them and becoming (anonymously) their chief protagonist and apologist in their wordy battle with the Jesuits then raging.

Pascal became as extreme in abnegation and self-chastisement in his religious life as he had been extreme in mathematical study. He gave all his money to charity; he forbade in himself, and objected to in others, the most harmless enjoyments; and spared himself no kind of mortification, pain or deprivation. He even wore a belt with sharpened points, and struck his elbow against it whenever he felt in himself any thrill of vanity or pleasure.

During the last years of his life, along with some final scientific writings and experiments, he worked on his projected *Apology for Christianity*, the notes for which, never completed, are now known as the *Pensées* or *Thoughts on Religion*. These notes were made in the intervals of painful and prostrating illness, and were never even arranged by him in a planned sequence.

Some early editors tried their own hand at a reasonable arrangement; but later editors have preferred to revert to the original uncollated order, and the present edition follows the later editors. The present text is incomplete because it is unnecessary to reproduce in a reading edition the entire text of the *Thoughts*. Minute and almost meaningless fragments, Scriptural summaries, and polemical passages bearing on theological controversies long ended, are omitted, together with some other pieces of limited value or interest.

Those passages here printed in brackets had been crossed out, but not thrown away, by Pascal himself, but have seemed worthy of preservation by his editors.



PASCAL'S
PENSÉES







Pascal's Pensées • or, thoughts on religion

MAN's inward conflict between reason and the passions. Had he reason only, without passions . . . had he passions only, without reason . . . , but having both, he must always be at war, since only by combating the other can he be at peace with the one: thus he is always divided against himself.

C On beholding the blindness and misery of man, on seeing all the universe dumb, and man without light, left to himself, and as it were astray in this corner of the universe, knowing not who has set him here, what he is here for, or what will become of him when he dies, incapable of all knowledge, I begin to be afraid, as a man who has been carried while asleep to a fearful desert island, and who will wake not knowing where he is and without any means of quitting the island. And thus I marvel that people are not seized with despair at such a miserable condition. I see about me other persons of similar nature: I ask them if they are better informed than I; they tell me "No"; and these miserable wanderers, having looked around them and seen some pleasing objects, have devoted themselves to these and become attached to them. For myself, I have not been able to become attached to them, and considering how much show and how little else there is in what I see, I have tried to find whether this God should not have left some mark of Himself.

I see a number of religions conflicting, and therefore all false but one. Each would be believed on its own authority, and threatens unbelievers. Therefore on that account I distrust them: each can speak so, each can call itself prophet. But I see the Christian religion, wherein are prophecies, and it is these that every religion cannot make.



¶ The soul is cast into the body, where she finds number, time, dimension. She reasons upon these things, and calls them “nature,” “necessity,” and cannot believe in anything else.

The unit, joined to the infinite, does not increase it, any more than a foot added to an infinite measure can increase it. The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite, and becomes as though it were not.

So our mind before God; so our righteousness before divine righteousness. There is more disproportion between our righteousness and God’s, than between the unit and the infinite. God’s justice must needs be as wide as His mercy, but towards reprobates His justice is not so wide, and should offend less than His mercy towards the elect.

We know that there is an infinite, and we are ignorant of its nature: for example, we know it is not true that numbers may be brought to an end, therefore, it is true that there is an infinity of number, but we do not know what that infinity is; it is wrong to say that it is even, it is wrong to say that it is uneven, for adding the unit does not change its nature; yet it is a number, and every number is either uneven or even (it is true that this is understood of all finite numbers). Thus we can indeed know that there is a God, without knowing what He is.

Is there not a substantial truth, seeing that so many things are true and yet not that same truth?

We know, then, the existence and the nature of the finite, because, like it, we are finite and have extension. We are aware of the existence of the infinite, and are ignorant of its nature, because, like us, it has extension, but, unlike us, it has no limits. But we know neither the existence nor the nature of God, because He has neither extension nor limits, yet by faith we know His existence, and through glory we shall know His nature: now I have already shown that we may truly be aware of the existence of a thing, without knowing its nature.

Let us speak now according to natural lights. If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having



neither parts nor limits, He has no correspondence with us; we are therefore incapable of knowing what He is, or if He is. That being so, who will dare to undertake to determine this question? Not we, who have no correspondence with Him.

Who then shall blame Christians, who profess a religion for which they cannot give reasons, for being unable to give reasons for their belief? They declare, in setting it forth to the world, that it is a foolishness, "*stultitiam*," and then you complain that they cannot prove it! If they proved it, they would belie their words; it is the lack of proofs which shows that they do not want understanding.

"Yes; but although that excuses those who put forward their belief in such a manner, and frees them from blame for offering it without proof, it does not excuse those who accept it."

Let us examine this point, then, and let us say "God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we lean? Reason cannot determine it: there is an infinite gulf between us. A game is being played far down that infinite distance, and it will be either cross or pile: which will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one nor the other; according to reason, you cannot uphold either. Therefore do not blame the error of those who have made a choice, for you do not know anything about it.

"No, but I will blame them for having made, not this choice, but any choice; for although he who takes cross and he who takes pile are equally wrong, still they are both in fault: the proper thing is not to wager."

Yes, but you must wager. It is not optional: you are committed to it. Which, then, will you take? Let us see. Since you have to choose, let us see which concerns you the least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good, and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your blessedness; and your nature has two things to avoid: error and misery. Since you must of necessity make a choice, your reason is not more offended by choosing the one than by choosing the other. There is one point settled. But your bless-



edness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss, by taking as cross that God is. Let us consider these two things: if you win, you win all; if you lose, you lose nothing: wager, therefore, that He is, without hesitating.

“That is wonderful. Yes, I must wager: but perhaps I stake too much?”

Let us see. Since there is equal risk of gain and loss, if you had only to win two lives for one, you might yet wager. But were there three to win you would have to play (since you are bound to play), and you would be imprudent, being forced to play, not to risk your life for three, in a game where there is an equal chance of loss and gain. But here is an infinity of life and happiness. And that being so, if there were an infinity of chances of which only one would be for you, you would still be right in staking one in order to have two, and being obliged to play, you would do foolishly to refuse to stake one life against three at a game where, of an infinite number of chances, one is for you, were there an infinity of infinitely happy life to be gained. But here is an infinity of infinitely happy life to be gained, one chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and that which you risk is finite. That is quite plain: wherever the infinite is concerned, and wherever there is not an infinity of risk of loss against that of gain, there is no room for hesitation, you must give all. And so, when one is forced to play, reason must be set aside in order to keep life rather than risk it for the infinite gain which is as likely as the loss of nothing.

For it is useless to say that it is uncertain that we shall gain, and certain that we run a risk; and that the infinite distance between the CERTAINTY of what is ventured, and the UNCERTAINTY of what will be gained, makes the finite good, which is ventured for certain, equal to the infinite good, which is uncertain. That is not so, as every player risks certainly to gain uncertainly, and nevertheless he risks the finite certainly to gain the finite uncertainly without offending reason. It is false that there is an infinite distance between the certainty of what is ventured and the uncertainty of gain. Truly, there is



infinity between the certainty of gain and the certainty of loss. But the uncertainty of winning is proportionate to the certainty of what is risked, according to the proportion of chances of gain and loss. And so it happens that if there is as much chance on one side as on the other the game is even, and then the certainty of what is ventured is equal to the uncertainty of gain, so far from being infinitely distant from it. And thus our proportion is of unbounded force in a game where the risks of gain and loss are equal, and where we have the finite to venture and the infinite to win. That is conclusive, and if men are capable of any truths at all, that is one.

“I confess it, I grant it. But is there no way of seeing through the game?”

Yes, the Scripture, and the remains, etc.

“Yes, but my hands are tied, and my lips are speechless; I am forced to wager, and I am not free; I am not set at liberty; and I am so constituted that I cannot believe. What, then, would you have me do?”

True. But at least learn your powerlessness to believe, seeing that although reason prompts you to believe, you nevertheless cannot do so; endeavour, therefore, not to convince yourself by heaping up proofs of God, but by reducing your passions. You would make for faith, and you do not know the way; you would cure yourself of infidelity, and you ask its remedy: learn of those who have been bound like you, and who now wager all they have; these are they who know the way you wish to follow, and who are cured of the malady of which you wish to be cured. Observe how they began: it was by doing all as if they believed, by taking holy water, by causing masses to be said, etc.; naturally that will make you, too, believe, and will abase you.

“But that is what I am afraid of.”

And why? What have you to lose? . . . But to show you what that means—it will reduce your passions, which are your great hindrances. . . . Now what harm will come to you by taking this course? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, benevolent, a sincere and true friend. Truly, you will not be amid tainted pleasures,



glory, delights, but will you not have others? I tell you that in this life you will gain by it, and that at each step you take on this road you will perceive such certainty of gain, and see so well the nothingness of what you are risking, that at the end you will know that you have wagered for something certain, something infinite, for which you have given nothing.

“Oh! this discourse enraptures, charms me,” etc.

If this discourse pleases you, and appears to you able, know that it is that of a man who went on his knees both before it and after it, to pray this Infinite and Indivisible Being, to whom he surrenders his whole self, to subdue yours also, for your own good and His glory, and that so the strength may agree with this baseness.

¶ We are under great obligation to those who warn us of faults, for they mortify. They apprise us that we have been mistaken; they do not prevent our being so again, for we have too many other faults for that, but they prepare the exercise for correction and the exemption of one fault.

¶ The only science opposed to common sense and human nature is the only one which has always existed among men.

¶ Think you it is impossible that God be infinite and indivisible? “Yes.” Then I will show you something infinite and indivisible; it is a point moving everywhere with infinite speed, for it is one in all places, and entire in each part.

Let this performance of nature, which just now appeared to you impossible, teach you that there can be many others with which you are not yet acquainted. Do not conclude from your apprenticeship that nothing is left for you to know, but that there is an infinity left for you to know.

¶ The heart has reasons unknown to reason; we know it in a thousand things. I aver that the heart naturally loves the universal being, and naturally loves itself, according



as it devotes itself to one or the other; and it hardens itself against one or the other according to its choice. You have rejected the one and held to the other: is it by reason that you love yourself?

¶ It is the heart which is conscious of God, not the reason. This is faith,—God evident to the heart and not to the reason.

¶ That we are worthy to be loved by others is false; to wish it is unjust. If we were born reasonable and impartial, understanding ourselves and others, we would not direct our will thus. We are born, however, with this disposition, therefore we are born unjust, for every one inclines towards himself. This is against all order: we should incline to the commonweal, and the leaning towards self is the beginning of every disorder in war, in politics, in economy, in the individual human body. The will, then, is depraved.

If the members of natural and civil communities incline to the good of the body, the communities themselves should incline towards another and more general body, of which they are members. We should incline, then, to the general. Therefore we are born unjust and depraved.

No religion but ours has taught that man is born in sin; no sect of philosophers has affirmed it, therefore none has spoken the truth.

No sect or religion except the Christian religion has always existed in the world.

¶ The most important thing in the whole of life is the choice of a vocation. Chance disposes it. Custom makes masons, soldiers, tilers. "That is an excellent tiler," they say; and in speaking of soldiers, "They are perfect fools"; and others say just the opposite, "There is nothing great but war; all other men are knaves." We choose these professions because in our childhood we have heard them praised and others disparaged, for we naturally love truth and hate folly; these two words stir us; we err only in their application. So great is the force of custom,



that out of those whom nature has made simply men, are fashioned all sorts of men; for some districts are all masons, others all soldiers, etc. Without doubt nature is not so uniform. Therefore it is custom which does this, for it constrains nature; though sometimes nature overcomes custom, and keeps man in his instinct in spite of all custom, good or bad.

¶ Man is plainly made to think; it is his whole dignity and his whole merit; and his whole duty is to think rightly; and his order of thought is to begin with himself, his author, and his end. But of what thinks the world? Never of these things, but of dancing, of playing the lute, of singing, of turning verses, of tilting at the ring, etc., of fighting, of making itself king, without any thought of what it is to be a king, and what it is to be a man.

¶ If there is a God, we must love Him alone, and not transient creatures. The argument of the impious, in WISDOM, is founded only on the supposition that there is no God. "That being granted," they say, "let us enjoy the creatures." That is the last shift. But if there were a God to love, they would not have drawn that conclusion but quite the opposite. And this is the conclusion of the wise: "There is a God, therefore let us not enjoy the creatures." So all that incites us to attach ourselves to the creature is evil, since it hinders us from serving God if we know Him, and from seeking Him if we know Him not. But we are full of concupiscence; therefore we are full of evil; therefore we ought to hate ourselves, and everything which prompts us to any attachment save to God alone.

¶ The principles of the pyrrhonians, stoics, atheists, etc., are all true. But their conclusions are false, because the contrary principles are true also.

¶ Man is full of wants: he loves only those who can fulfil them all. "This is a good mathematician," they will say. But I have no need of mathematics: he would take me for a proposition. "This is a good soldier." He would



take me for a besieged place. I want, then, a worthy man who can adapt himself to all my needs generally.

☪ A true friend is so advantageous, even to the greatest lords (provided that he speak good of them and uphold them in their absence as well), that they should do all they can to possess one. But let them make a wise choice, for if they exert themselves for fools, it will avail them nothing, whatever good these speak of them; and, moreover, these will not speak good of them if they find themselves in a minority, having no authority; and thus they will slander them because their company does so.

☪ He who hates not the self-love within him, and the instinct which leads him to make himself God, is very blind. Who does not see that nothing is so opposed to justice and truth? For that we are worthy to be God is false, and to attain to it is wrong and out of the question, since all are asking for the same thing. It is therefore a manifest injustice inherent in us, and from which we cannot free ourselves, and nevertheless must be quit of.

Yet no religion has marked that this is a sin, or that we were born in it, or that we are bound to resist it, or taken care to give us the remedies for it.

☪ That which disqualifies us for comparing what formerly happened in the Church with what we find there now, is that St. Athanasius, St. Theresa, and others are generally thought of as crowned with glory and dealing with us as if they were gods. Now that time has thrown a halo round things, that appears to be the case. But in the days when he was persecuted, this great saint was a man called Athanasius, and St. Theresa was a girl. Elias was a man like ourselves, and subject to the same passions as we are, says St. James, in order to disabuse Christians of the false idea which makes us reject the example of the saints as being beyond us. "They were saints," we say; "They were not like us." What then? St. Athanasius was a man called Athanasius, accused of many crimes, condemned by such-and-such a council for



such-and-such a crime, all the bishops, and finally the Pope, consenting thereto. What was said of them who resisted these? That they disturbed the peace, that they caused schism, etc.

Four sorts of persons: zeal without knowledge; knowledge without zeal; neither knowledge nor zeal, and zeal and knowledge. The three first condemn it, and the last absolve it and are excommunicated by the Church, and nevertheless save the Church.

€ A portrait carries with it absence and presence, pleasure and displeasure; the reality shuts out absence and displeasure.

€ There are three means of belief: reason, custom, and inspiration. The Christian religion, which alone has reason, does not admit as her true children those who believe without inspiration; not that she excludes reason and custom,—on the contrary,—but they must open their minds to proofs and confirm themselves in them by custom, and yield themselves through humiliations to inspiration, which alone can have true and salutary effect: “*Ne evacuetur crux Christi.*”

€ There are two ways of convincing people of the truths of our religion: the one by the force of reason, the other by the authority of him who speaks.

We use the first, not the last. We do not say, “That must be believed, for the Scripture which asserts it is divine,” but “It must be believed for such-and-such a reason,”—which are weak arguments, reason being adaptable to everything.

€ We never rest in the present. We anticipate the future as though it were too slow, and as if to hasten it; or we recall the past, to delay it, as though it were too fleeting: so imprudent are we, that we dally in times which are not our own, thinking not of the only time which belongs to us; and so vain, that we dream of those that are no more, and let the only one which is, escape without a thought. It is because, as a rule, the present displeases



us. We hide it from sight if it is vexatious, and lament to see it pass if it is agreeable. We try to hold it by means of the future, and think to dispose things which are not in our hands for a time at which we have no certainty of arriving.

Let each examine his thoughts, and he will find them constantly occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely think of the present at all, and, if we do think of it, it is only to draw from it guidance for the future. The present is never our aim, and while it and the past are our means, the future alone is our end. Thus we never live, but are always hoping to live, and, constantly preparing ourselves to be happy, it is beyond doubt that we never shall be happy.

¶ What vanity is painting, which attracts admiration by its resemblance to things whose originals we do not admire!

¶ Such is the sweetness of glory that we love whatsoever object to which it is attached, even death.

¶ Caesar was too old, it seems to me, to go about amusing himself by conquering the world. This amusement was good for Augustus or Alexander,—they were young men, and young men are difficult to restrain, but Caesar ought to have been more mature.

¶ Whoso sees not the vanity of the world is himself very vain. And who does not see it, except young people who are occupied with bustle and diversion, and the thought of the future? But deprive them of their diversion, and you will see them pine away with ennui; they then feel their nothingness without being aware of it; for to be made intolerably wretched as soon as one is reduced to unalleviated self-contemplation is to be unhappy indeed.

¶ Men occupy themselves by pursuing a ball or a hare; it is the amusement even of kings.



☪ Too much and too little wine: give him none, and he cannot find truth; give him too much, and it is the same.

☪ “Why do you kill me?” “What, do you not live on the other side of the water? My friend, if you live on this side, I should be an assassin, and it would be wrong to kill you thus; but since you live on the other side, I am a brave man, and it is a lawful act.”

☪ If we read too quickly or too slowly we understand nothing.

☪ Of how many kingdoms do we know nothing!

☪ A little thing consoles us, because a little thing distresses us.

☪ Begin by pitying the unbelievers: their condition makes them unhappy enough. They should not be abused, unless that serves a good purpose; but it does harm to them.

☪ The impious, who profess to follow reason, ought to be exceptionally skilful in argument. What, then, do they say? “Do we not see,” say they, “beasts living and dying like men, and Turks like Christians? They have their ceremonies, prophets, doctors, saints, religions, like us,” etc. Is that contrary to Scripture? Does it not tell us all that?

If you care little to know the truth, here is enough of it to leave you in peace. But if you desire to know it with all your heart, this is not sufficient,—look at the circumstances. This will be enough for a question of philosophy; but here, where everything is concerned . . . And yet, after a passing thought of this kind they will amuse themselves, etc. Let them inquire into this religion, even if it does not give the reason of this obscurity: it may be that it will teach it us.

☪ Faith differs from proof: the one is human, the other is a gift from God. “*Justus ex fide vivit.*” It is of this faith, which God himself instils into the heart, that the



proof is often the instrument; “*fides ex auditu*”; but this faith is within the heart, and makes us say not “*Scio*,” but “*Credo*.”

¶ We run heedlessly into the precipice after setting something in front of us to hinder our seeing it.

¶ Man is not worthy of God; but he is not incapable of being made worthy of Him. It is beneath God to attach Himself to miserable man, but it is not beneath Him to take man out of his misery.

¶ Men scorn religion; they hate it, and fear that it may be true. To remedy this, it is necessary to begin by showing that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence, so as to inspire respect for it; next we must make it lovely, so that the good may wish that it might be true; and then show that it is true.

Worthy of reverence, because it has a deep knowledge of man.

Worthy of love, because it promises the true good.

¶ If Jesus Christ had come only to sanctify, the whole of Scripture and everything would point to it, and it would be easy to convince the unbelievers; if Jesus Christ had come only to make blind, all his conduct would be confused, and we should have had no means of convincing unbelievers. But, as He has come “*in sanctificationem et in scandalum*,” as saith Isaiah, we cannot convince the unbelievers, and they cannot convince us, but, even thus, we do convince them, since we say that His conduct carries no conviction on either side.

¶ When the word of God, which is true, is literally false, it is true in spirit, as “*Sede a dextris meis*,” which is false in the letter, but true in spirit. In these expressions God is spoken of humanly, and they signify merely that the purpose which men have in seating any one at their right hand, God has also. It is therefore a mark of God’s purpose, not of His manner of executing it. Thus, when it says, “God has accepted the odour of your perfumes,



and will give you in recompense a fruitful land," it means that the same purpose that a man who accepts your perfumes would have in giving you a fruitful land in recompense, God will have towards you, because you have the same intention towards Him that a man has towards one to whom he offers perfumes. Thus "*Iratus est*," "Jealous God," for the things of God being inexplicable, they cannot be called otherwise, and the Church to-day still uses them. "*Quia confortavit seras*," etc.

¶ Two errors—first, to take everything literally; secondly, to take everything spiritually.

¶ There are some who see plainly that man's only enemy is lust, which diverts him from God, and not God, nor any other good but God, and not a fruitful land. Those who believe that good is in the flesh, and evil in that which diverts man from sensual pleasures, let them take their fill of them, and die thereof.

But those who seek God with all their hearts, those who are unhappy only when he is out of their sight, those who have no desire but to possess Him, and who are enemies of those who would turn them from Him, those who sorrow to see themselves encompassed and dominated by such foes, let them comfort themselves; I bring them good tidings, there is a Deliverer for them. I will show Him to them. I will show them that they have a God, but to the others I will not show Him. I will show that a Messiah has been promised, who should deliver them from their enemies, and that He has come to deliver them, not from their enemies, but from their sins.

When David foretold that the Messiah should deliver His people from their enemies, it might carnally be believed that he meant from the Egyptians, and then I should not know how to show that the prophecy is accomplished. But it may well be that he means from sins, for in truth the Egyptians are not enemies, but sins are. The word enemies, therefore, is ambiguous. But if he says elsewhere, as he does, with Isaiah and others, that He shall deliver His people from their sins, the un-



certainty is removed, and the double sense of “enemies” is reduced to the simple sense of “sins”; for if he had sins in his mind, he might very well express them as enemies, while if he were thinking of enemies, he could not call them sins.

And Moses, David, and Isaiah also employ these terms. Who, therefore, shall say that they have not the same sense, and that David’s meaning when he speaks of enemies, which is evidently that of sins, was not the same as that of Moses when speaking of enemies? Daniel prays for the deliverance of the people from captivity under their enemies, but he was thinking of sins, and, to prove it, he says that Gabriel came to tell him that his prayer was heard, and that he had but seventy weeks to wait, after which the people would be delivered from iniquity, and an end be made of sin; and the Deliverer, the Holy of the holy ones, should bring in everlasting righteousness, not of the law, but eternal.

¶ As soon as the secret of figures is once disclosed, it is impossible not to see it. Read the Old Testament in this light, and see whether the sacrifices were real, if kinship with Abraham were the true cause of God’s favour, if the promised land were the true place of repose. No. Therefore these were figures.

Let all ordained ceremonies, all commandments, which are not towards charity, be looked at in this way, and it will be seen that they are its types.

All these sacrifices and ceremonies, therefore, were either figures or foolishness. But there are some plain things which are too high to be accounted foolishness.

¶ Those who find it difficult to believe, in seeking a reason for the disbelief of the Jews, say, “If it was clear, why did they not believe?” And they almost wish that they might believe, so as not to be influenced by the example of their refusal. But it is this very refusal which is the foundation of our belief. We should be less inclined to it were our belief theirs. We should then have a more ample pretext. It is wonderful to have made the



Jews such lovers of the things foretold, and such enemies of their fulfilment!

¶ The world in general has the faculty of not considering things which it does not wish to consider. "Think not on the passages concerning the Messiah," said the Jew to his son. Ours frequently do so. Thus false religions, and even the true one, are preserved in regard to many people. But there are some who are not able to keep themselves from thinking, and the more they are forbidden, the more they think. Such forsake the false religions and even the true one, if they do not find sound discourses.

¶ "I should have soon quitted pleasures," they say, "if I had faith." And I say to you, "You would soon have faith had you quitted pleasures." Thus it is for you to begin. If I could I would give you faith, and thus prove the truth of what you say. But I cannot. But you can indeed quit the pleasures, and prove if what I tell you is true.

¶ It is vain to say, "It must be acknowledged that the Christian religion is marvellous!" "It is because you have been born in it," they will tell you. So far from that, I harden myself against it for this very reason, for fear that it will bias me; but, although I be born in it, I do not cease to find it marvellous.

¶ Scripture has provided for the consolation of all conditions of men, and for the intimidation of all conditions of men. Nature seems to have done the same by her two infinities, natural and moral, for we shall always have high and low, more clever and less clever, more elevated and more miserable, that our pride may be put down and our abasement relieved.

¶ Isaiah vi.—The Red Sea, typifying the Redemption. "*Ut sciatis quod Filius habet potestatem remittendi peccata, tibi dico: Surge.*"



God, wishing to show that He could make a people holy with an invisible holiness, and fill them with an everlasting glory, has made some things plain. Since nature is an image of grace, He has dealt with the blessings of nature as He will deal with the blessings of grace, in order that it might be manifest that He could do the invisible, since He can certainly do the visible. He has therefore saved this people from the flood, He has raised them up from Abraham, ransomed them from their enemies, and set them in tranquillity.

God's purpose was not to save them from the flood and raise up a people from Abraham, merely to bring them into a fruitful country. And likewise grace is only the figure of glory, and not the ultimate aim. Grace was typified by the law, and herself typifies glory; but she is at once its type and its principle or cause.

Man's ordinary life is like that of the saints. Both seek satisfaction, and they differ only in the object in which they set it. They call those who hinder them their enemies. God therefore has shown His power to give invisible gifts, in that He has the power to dispose of the visible.

¶ As Jesus Christ remained unknown among men, so His truth remains among common opinions, without any external difference; and in like manner the Eucharist among ordinary bread.

¶ God would dispose the will rather than the mind. Perfect light would nourish the intellect, and starve the will.

¶ The atheist's complaint,—“But we have no light!”

¶ What have they to say against the resurrection, and against the conception of the Virgin? Which is the more difficult, to produce a man or an animal, or to reproduce it? And if they had never seen a certain kind of animal, could they tell whether it was produced without the company of the one with another?



¶ That which his highest intelligence has taught to man, this religion has imparted to her children.

¶ He who says that man is too small to be worthy of communion with God must himself be very great to pass judgment on the matter.

¶ *Pursuit of the true good:* The generality of men set happiness in fortune and external possessions, or at any rate in diversion. Philosophers have shown the vanity of this, and have set happiness where they could.

¶ Human nature is all nature: "*omne animal.*" There is nothing which is not made natural; there is nothing natural which cannot be got rid of.

¶ In spite of the sight of all the troubles which agitate us and hold us fast, we have an irrepressible instinct which elevates us.

¶ Nothing is so intolerable to man as to be in a state of perfect repose, without passions, without business, without diversion, without employment. He then feels his nothingness, his desolation, his limitation, his dependence, his impotence, his emptiness. And forthwith from the depths of his soul will come weariness, gloom, sadness, chagrin, vexation, and despair.

¶ So obvious is the duplicity of man, that there are some who have thought that we have two souls, a simple subject appearing to them incapable of such sudden fluctuations between an excessive presumption and a fearful despondency.

¶ *Of the desire to be esteemed by those about us:* Pride is so naturally inherent in us, amidst all our troubles and errors, etc.: we gladly lose even life itself, provided that people talk about it!

Vanity: play, chase, visiting, false comedies, perpetuity of name.

¶ Vanity is so fixed in the human heart, that a soldier, a navy, a cook, a street-porter, plumes himself and wishes



to have his admirers, and even philosophers desire them; and those who write against glory wish for the glory of having written well; and those who read what is written wish for the glory of having read it; and I who write this perhaps have this desire, and maybe those who shall read it. . . .

¶ Why is my knowledge limited—or my stature—or my existence to a hundred years instead of a thousand? What reason had nature for giving me so many, and choosing this rather than some other number out of an infinity from which there is no more reason to choose one than to choose another, since one does not put itself more forward than another?

¶ [Since we cannot be universal and know all that is to be known about everything, we must know a little of everything. For it is vastly better to know something of everything than all of one thing; this universality is the finer. If one could have both, so much the better; but since a choice has to be made, it must fall on the former, and the world is conscious of it and acts accordingly—for the world is frequently a very good judge.]

¶ [My caprice makes me hate a croaker, and a person who blows while eating. Caprice has great weight. What shall we gather from this? That we should follow this inclination because it is natural? No, but that we should resist it.]

¶ *Source of contradictions:* A God humiliated even to the Cross; a Messiah triumphant over death by His death; two natures in Jesus Christ; two comings; two states of man's nature.

¶ Who taught the Evangelists the qualities of a perfectly heroic soul, that they were able to delineate it so exactly in Jesus Christ? Why do they make Him weak in His agony? Could they not describe an unflinching death? Yes, for the same St. Luke depicts the death of St. Stephen as stronger than that of Jesus Christ. They therefore make Him capable of fear before the necessity



to die be come, and then they make Him wholly strong. But when they show Him so troubled, it is while He troubles Himself; when men trouble Him, He is perfectly strong.

¶ The style of the Gospels is marvellous in so many respects, and, among others, in never directing any invective against the tormentors and enemies of Jesus Christ. For none is employed against Judas, or Pilate, or any of the Jews, by any of the narrators.

Had this reserve of the evangelical historians, as well as many other features of so lofty a nature, been assumed, merely that it might be remarked upon, if they had not ventured to remark upon it themselves, they would not have failed to find friends to make these remarks for them. But as they acted thus unaffectedly, and from a perfectly unselfish motive, they had it remarked by none. And I believe that many of these things have been unobserved up to the present, and that it is this which witnesses to the disinterestedness with which the thing was done.

¶ Evil is never wrought so completely and so cheerfully as when it is wrought for conscience's sake.

¶ As the mind becomes corrupted, so also does the judgment. The mind and the judgment are formed by conversation; the mind and the judgment are spoiled by conversation, so that good or bad conversations either form or spoil it. It is all-important, therefore, to know how to discriminate, in order to form one's judgment and not to spoil it, and the distinction cannot be made unless the judgment is already formed and unspoiled. Thus we have a circle, and fortunate are they who can get out of it.

¶ The infinite distance between body and mind typifies the infinitely more infinite distance between the mind and love, for love is above nature.

All the pomp of greatness has no attraction for men of intellectual pursuits. The greatness of the intellectual is invisible to kings, to the rich, to captains, to all the



carnally great. The greatness of wisdom, which is nothing if not of God, is invisible to the carnal and to the intellectual. These are three different species of the genius.

Great geniuses have their sphere of dominion, their greatness, their victory, their lustre, and have no need of external greatness, with which they have no relation. They are seen, not by the eye, but by the mind, and that suffices. The saints have their sphere of dominion, their glory, their victory, their lustre, and have no need of carnal or intellectual greatness, with which they have no relation, for such grandeurs as these neither add to nor diminish their own. They are beheld by God and the angels, and not by the eye or by the inquiring intellect. God is sufficient for them.

Archimedes would be held in the same veneration, even with no glory. He has not fought battles for the eye, but he has supplied every intellect with his discoveries. Oh, how he has shone before the mind! Jesus Christ, without possessions and without any outward show of knowledge, is in His own order of sanctity. He has given no invention, He has borne no sway; but He was patient, meek, holy, holy before God, terrible to evil spirits, sinless. Oh, in what great splendour and wondrous magnificence is He come before the eyes of the heart, which behold wisdom!

It would have been useless for Archimedes to play the prince in his geometrical books, although he was so indeed. It would have been useless for our Lord Jesus Christ to introduce pomp into His reign of holiness, to appear as a king; but He indeed came with the splendour of His own order. It is very foolish to be offended at the lowliness of Jesus Christ, as if this lowliness were of the same order as the glory that He came to make manifest. Let us consider this glory in His life, His passion, His obscurity, His death, in the choice of His elect, in their desertion, in His secret resurrection, and in everything we shall find it so great that we shall have no reason to be offended by a lowliness which is not there. But there are some who can admire only carnal glories, as



if there were no intellectual glories, and others who admire only the intellectual, as if wisdom did not offer others infinitely higher.

All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are not worth the smallest mind, for a mind knows them, and itself, and bodies know nothing. All bodies together, and all minds together, and all the productions of both, are not worth the least act of love, for love is of an order infinitely higher.

From all bodies together we cannot succeed in getting one single little thought: it is impossible, thought belongs to another order. From all bodies and all minds together, we cannot draw one movement of true love: it is impossible, for love is of another order, and above nature.

¶ *Proofs of Jesus Christ:* The hypothesis of false apostles is very absurd. Let it be worked out—imagine these twelve men assembled after the death of Jesus Christ, conspiring to say that He was risen from the dead: thereby they attack all the powers. The human heart is strangely inclined to triviality, change, promises, and possessions. Had one of these men been drawn aside ever so little by all these attractions, and, what is more, by persons, by tortures, and by death, they would have been lost. Let it be worked out.

¶ I. The greatness and the misery of man are so evident that the true religion must of necessity teach them, and there must be some ruling principle both of the greatness and of the misery. Religion, then, must account to us for these surprising contradictions.

In order to make man happy, religion must show him that there is a God; that he is required to love Him; that our real happiness is to be in Him, and our only ill to be cut off from Him; it must recognise that we are surrounded by a darkness which hinders us from knowing God and loving Him; and that as our duty requires us to love God, and our lust diverts us from Him, we are thus full of unrighteousness. It must show us the reason for our aversion from God and our own welfare. It must



teach us the remedies for our helplessness, and the means of obtaining these remedies. Let every one examine all the religions of the world, and see if there be any other than Christianity which can satisfy him. Can the philosophers satisfy him, who offer as the total good the things we possess in ourselves? Is this the true good? Have they found a remedy for our ills? Have they cured man's presumption by making him equal with God? Those who have compared us to beasts, and the Mahometans who have offered us worldly pleasures as the total good, even in eternity,—have they produced a remedy for our concupiscence?

What religion, then, will teach us how to cure pride and lust? In short, what religion will teach us our good, our duty, the weaknesses which turn us from them, the cause of these weaknesses, their remedies, and the means of procuring these remedies? None of these other religions can do it. Let us see what the Wisdom of God can compass.

“Expect not,” saith she, “either truth or consolation from man. It is I who have made you, and who alone can teach you what you are. But you are now no longer in the state in which I made you. I created man holy, innocent, perfect; I filled him with light and understanding; I showed him my glory and my wonders, and the eye of man beheld God's majesty. He was not then in the darkness which now obscures his sight, nor subject to the mortality and wretchedness which now afflict him. But he was not able to support such glory without falling into presumption. He desired to stand alone, and to be independent of my help. He broke away from my control, and as he measured himself against me by desiring to find his happiness in his own being, I have abandoned him to himself, and, causing the creatures who were once in subjection to man to revolt against him, I have made them his enemies, so that he has now become like to them, and so estranged from me that there remains to him scarcely one faint glimmer of light concerning his creator, so greatly has his understanding been extinguished or bedimmed. The senses, independent of



reason and often its masters, have carried him away in search of pleasures. Every creature vexes or tries him, and dominates him either by compelling force, or by seductive gentleness – which is the more terrible and more complete domination. That is the state in which men now are. While preserving from their first nature some feeble instinct of happiness, they are absorbed in the miseries of their blindness, and of the lust which has become their second nature.

By this principle which I put before you, you can discover the cause of the many contradictions which have surprised all men, and which have given rise to so many different opinions. Mark all man's impulses towards greatness and glory, which even the experience of so many miseries cannot stifle, and see if their mainspring be not in another nature.

11. "In vain, O men, do ye seek within yourselves the cure for your troubles! All your knowledge can only teach you that it is not within you that ye find the true or the good. Philosophers have promised them to you, and have promised what they have not been able to perform, knowing neither your true state nor your true good. How, then, should they give remedies for diseases which they have not known? Your chief ills are pride, which estranges you from God, and lust, which binds you to earth; and they have done nothing but encourage one at least of these maladies. If they have set God before you for an object, it has only been to exercise your vainglory: they have made you think that you are like Him and by nature conformable to Him. And those who have seen the vanity of this pretension have cast you into the other abyss, by giving you to understand that your nature is akin to that of the beasts, and have led you to seek your good in the lusts which are the portion of animals. This is not the way to cure you of your unrighteousness, which these sages have never understood.

[By me alone can these things be taught you, and to those who listen to me I impart them. The books which I have put into men's hands show them very plainly. But



I would not have this knowledge so open. I teach men that which can make them happy: why refuse to hear me? Seek not satisfaction in the world, hope for nothing from men. In God alone is your good, and your sovereign happiness consists in knowing Him and living in eternal union with Him. Your duty is to love Him with all your heart. He has created you. . . .”]

iii. Adam — Jesus Christ.

If you are made one with God, it is by grace, and not by nature; if you are abased, it is by penitence, and not by nature; hence, this double capacity. . . .

You are not in the state in which you were created. These two states being patent, it is impossible for you not to recognize them. Follow your motives, observe yourselves, and see if you do not find there the most salient features of both these natures. Can so many contradictions exist in one single individual?

Incomprehensible? — All which is incomprehensible does not cease to be; the infinite number, an infinite space equal to the finite.

Incredible that God may unite Himself with us? — This conviction comes of contemplating our vileness. But if you hold it sincerely, follow it out as far as I do, and see that we are indeed so vile that of ourselves we cannot know whether His mercy can make us capable of Him. For I would know whence this animal, which knows itself to be so feeble, has the right to measure the mercy of God and to set such limits to it as its fancy may suggest. So far from knowing what God is, man knows not what he is himself, and, troubled by the sight of his own condition, he dares to say that God cannot put this communion within his power. But I would ask him if God desires any other thing of him except that, through knowing God, he love Him, and why he believes that God cannot make man to know and love Him, since man is naturally capable of love and knowledge. It is beyond question that he knows that he is, and that he loves something. Therefore, if he perceive anything through the surrounding darkness, and if he find among the things of the earth anything he can love,



why, if God gives him some ray from His own Being, shall he not be capable of knowing and loving Him in the manner that it shall please Him to reveal to us? Therefore, there is assuredly an intolerable presumption in this kind of argument, although it seems founded on an apparent humility which is neither sincere nor reasonable if it does not make us confess that, knowing neither ourselves nor what we are, we can learn it only of God.

iv. "I do not require you to submit your belief to me without reason, and I do not mean to enthrall you by tyranny. Nor do I mean to give you reasons for everything; and to reconcile these contradictions. I intend to make you see clearly, by convincing evidence, the divine tokens in me, to satisfy you of what I am, and draw authority to myself by wonders and proofs which you cannot reject, so that consequently you may be assured of the things I teach you when you find no other reason to refuse them but that you cannot of yourselves tell whether they are or no."

"God desired to ransom men, and open salvation to those who should seek it. But men make themselves so unworthy of it, that it is but just that God, because of their hardness, withhold from some that which he grants to others by a mercy to which they have no right. Had He wished to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened, He would have been able to do so by revealing Himself to them so manifestly that they could not doubt the truth of His being, just as He shall appear at the last day with such noise of thunder and such subversion of nature that the dead shall rise and the blindest shall see Him."

"But it is not thus that He has chosen to appear in His advent of peace; because, so many making themselves unworthy of His mercy, He desired to have them deprived of the good which they would not have. Therefore it was not just that He should appear in a manner manifestly divine and absolutely sure to convince all men; but neither was it just that He should come in a manner so obscure as not to be recognised by those who should sincerely seek Him. He desired to make Himself



perfectly knowable to these, and thus, wishing to appear openly to those who gladly seek Him, and hidden to those who wilfully turn from Him, He so veiled His identity that He exhibited marks of Himself which are visible to those who seek Him, and invisible to those who seek Him not. There is enough light for those who only desire to seek Him, and enough obscurity for those contrarily disposed.”

¶ Jesus Christ came to confuse those who saw clearly, and to give sight to the blind; to heal the sick, and to leave the whole to die; to call to repentance and justify sinners, and to leave the righteous in their sins; to satisfy the poor, and to leave the rich empty.

¶ Jesus Christ said great things so simply that it seems as though He had not thought about them, and, nevertheless, so exactly that it is plain that He did think about them. This clearness, joined to this artlessness, is wonderful.

¶ *Against the objection that the Scripture has no method:* The heart and the mind both have their method. That of the mind is according to principle and demonstration; that of the heart is otherwise. One does not show that one ought to be loved by setting forth in order the causes of love: that would be ridiculous.

Jesus Christ and St. Paul have the method of charity, not of the intellect; for they wished to enkindle, not to instruct. So also with St. Augustine. This method consists chiefly in enlarging on every point which bears on the end, so as to keep this end constantly in view.

¶ The Church has had as much labour to show that Jesus Christ was Man, against those who denied it, as to show that He was God; and the appearances were equal in both cases.

¶ An artisan who talks of riches, an attorney who talks of war, of royalty, etc.; but the rich speak truly concerning riches, the king speaks coldly of the great gift he has just made, and God speaks truly concerning God.



¶ The Jews, by testing if He were God, have shown that He was Man.

¶ *Predisposition conducive to error:* It is a deplorable thing to see men deliberating only on the means and not on the end. Each considers how he shall acquit himself in his profession, but the choice of condition or country is determined by fate. It is a pitiful thing to see so many Turks, heretics, and infidels following their fathers' lead for the sole reason that each respectively has been predisposed to the belief that that is the best thing to follow. And it is this which determines each one's profession, whether that of locksmith, soldier, etc. Thus the savages do not wish for Provence.

¶ A man in a cell, knowing not whether his sentence is given, having but an hour to learn it, this hour sufficing (if he know it to have been given) to have it revoked, it is against nature that he employ this hour, not in inquiring if his sentence is passed, but in playing at piquet; thus it is supernatural that man, etc.; it is a heaviness of the hand of God.

Thus, it is not only the zeal of those who seek Him which proves God, but the blindness of those who seek Him not.

¶ Atheism—a mark of strength of intellect, but only up to a certain point.

¶ There are only three kinds of people: those who serve God, having found Him; those who are occupied in seeking Him, not having found Him; and those who live without seeking Him and without having found Him; the first are reasonable and happy; the last are foolish and unhappy; and those between them are unhappy and reasonable.

¶ It is well to be wearied and fatigued by the quest of the true good, so that we may stretch out our arms to the Deliverer.

¶ According to one or the other of these two different suppositions, so must we live in the world:



1. If we could live there always.
2. If it is certain that we shall not be there long, and uncertain that we shall be there a single hour.

Ours is this latter supposition.

¶ The last act is tragic, however fine the comedy in all the rest: at the last they cast earth on our heads, and so are we for ever.

¶ Atheists should have everything perfectly clear: but it is not perfectly clear that the soul is material.

¶ Man is only a reed, the feeblest reed in nature, but he is a thinking reed. There is no need for the entire universe to arm itself in order to annihilate him: a vapour, a drop of water, suffices to kill him. But were the universe to crush him, man would yet be more noble than that which slays him, because he knows that he dies, and the advantage that the universe has over him; of this the universe knows nothing. Thus all our dignity lies in thought. By thought we must raise ourselves, not by space and time, which we cannot fill. Let us strive, then, to think well,—therein is the principle of morality.

¶ Between us, and heaven or hell, there is only life, of all things in the world the most frail.

¶ It is curious that we rest content in the company of our fellows. Wretched like ourselves, powerless as we are, they will not aid us; each one must die alone; therefore we should act as if we were alone, and in that case, should we build magnificent houses, etc.? We should seek the truth without hesitation, and did any refuse, he would show that he valued the esteem of men more than the search for truth.

¶ If it is a strange blindness to live without finding out what we are, it is a terrible blindness to believe in God, and to live evilly.

¶ Man's sensibility to small things and his insensibility to great things indicate a strange derangement.



¶ If a man know not that he is full of pride, ambition, lust, weakness, misery, and injustice, he is very blind; and if, while knowing it, he do not desire to be delivered from these things, what can be said of such a man? . . . What, then, but esteem can we have for a religion so well acquainted with human failings, or how can we but long for the truth of a religion which promises for those failings remedies so desirable?

¶ We think we play on ordinary organs when we play on men. They are organs indeed, but fantastic, inconstant, variable. Those who can play only the ordinary organs will not find themselves in touch with these. You must know where the [keys] are.

¶ It is not well to be too free; it is not well to have every necessary.

¶ When I consider the brief span of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and behind it, the small space that I fill, or even see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces which I know not, and which know not me, I am afraid, and wonder to see myself here rather than there; for there is no reason why I should be here rather than there, now rather than then. Who has set me here? By whose order and arrangement have this place and this time been allotted me? "*Memoria hospitis unius diei praetereuntis.*"

¶ We are so unhappy that we cannot take pleasure in a thing without vexing ourselves if it go ill, which a thousand things can cause, and do cause, every hour. Whoever had discovered the secret of rejoicing in the good without troubling about the contrary: evil, would have found the point. It is perpetual motion.

¶ When it is a question of judging whether war ought to be made and so many men killed, so many Spaniards condemned to death, it is one single man who determines it, and he an interested one. It should be a neutral third party.



¶ *Inconstancy*: Things have diverse qualities, and the soul has diverse tendencies; for nothing is simple which presents itself to the soul, and the soul never presents itself as simple to any object. Thence it comes that we laugh and cry at the same thing.

¶ Tyranny is the desire of universal domination, beyond its proper sphere.

There are divers classes of the strong, the beautiful, the learned, the pious, each of which ought to rule in its own place, and not elsewhere. Sometimes they come into collision, and the strong and the beautiful foolishly strive as to which shall be master; for their superiority is of different kinds. They do not act in concert, and their fault is that they wish to bear rule everywhere. Nothing can do this, not even force; it can do nothing in the domain of the learned; it is mistress of outward actions alone.

Thus speeches like these are wrong and tyrannical: "I am handsome, therefore I ought to be feared; I am strong, therefore I ought to be loved; I am . . ." Tyranny is the desire to have by one way that which can be had only by another. Different respect is paid to different merits; the respect of love to what is lovely; the respect of fear to strength; the respect of belief to knowledge. We ought to offer this respect; it is unjust to withhold it, and unjust to require it of others. And in the same way it is wrong and tyrannical to say, "He is not strong, therefore I shall not esteem him; he is not clever, therefore I shall not fear him."

¶ Upon what will he establish the economy of the world that he wishes to govern? On the caprice of each individual? What confusion! On justice? He knows it not.

Certainly, had he known it, he would not have adduced this maxim, — the commonest of all obtaining among men,—that each should follow the customs of his country; the glory of true equity would have subdued all peoples, and legislators would not have taken as their model, in place of this unvarying justice, the whims and



caprices of Persians and Germans. We should have seen it planted by every State in the world and in every age, instead of which we find nothing just or unjust which does not change its character with its climate. Three degrees of elevation of the pole upset all jurisprudence. A meridian determines the truth; after a few years of possession the fundamental laws change; right has its epochs. The entry of Saturn on the Lion indicates to us the origin of such and such a crime. A queer justice—bounded by a river! Truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on that.

They acknowledge that justice lies not in these customs, but in the natural laws known in all countries. They would certainly have obstinately maintained it, if the temerity of the chance which has sown human laws had permitted one of them, at least, to be universal; but the absurdity is such, that human caprice is so varied that there is no law of the kind at all.

Larceny, incest, infanticide, parricide, have all had their place among virtuous actions. Can there be anything more ridiculous than that a man have the right to kill me because he lives on the other side of the water, and because his prince has a quarrel with mine, although I have none with him?

No doubt there are natural laws; but this fine reason, corrupted, has corrupted all: "*Nil amplius nostrum est; quod nostrum dicimus, artis est.*" "*Ex senatus-consultis et plebiscitis crimina exercentur.*" "*Ut olim vitii sic nunc legibus laboremus.*"

From this confusion it arises that one says that the essence of justice is the authority of the legislator; another, the convenience of the sovereign; another, present custom, and this is the surest: nothing, according to reason alone, is just in itself—time disturbs everything. Custom makes all equity, for the simple reason that it is accepted: herein is the mystic foundation of its authority. Whoever traces custom back to its principle annihilates it. Nothing is so faulty as those laws which redress faults; whoever obeys them, because they are just, obeys a justice which he imagines to exist, but not the essence



of the law: it is all self-contained; it is law, and nothing more. He who desires to examine its motive will find it so weak and so slight, that, if he is unused to contemplate the wonders of the human imagination, he will marvel that a century has acquired for it so much pomp and reverence. *L'art de fronder*,—the art of subverting states, is to shake established customs by sounding them at their source, that their lack of authority and justice may be noticed. “It is necessary,” it is said, “to go back to the fundamental and primitive laws of the state, which an unjust custom has abolished.” This is a sure way of losing everything: nothing will be right according to this standard. However, the people listen willingly to these speeches. They shake off the yoke as soon as they are aware of it, and the great profit by their ruin and that of the inquisitive examiners of accepted customs. But, by a contrary error, men sometimes think they have a right to do anything which is not without precedent. That is why the wisest of legislators said that men must often be duped for their own good; and another, a good politician,—“*Cum veritatem, qua liberetur, ignoret, expedit quod fallatur.*” It is not needful for him to be convinced of the usurpation: it was formerly introduced without reason, and has now become reasonable; it is necessary to make it to be considered as authentic and eternal, and to hide its origin, if we do not desire it soon to come to an end.

[But perhaps the subject is beyond the range of reason? Then let us examine reason’s inventions in things within its power. If there is anything to which its own interest should have made it apply itself most seriously, it is the search for its sovereign good. Let us see, therefore, where strong and penetrating minds have set this sovereign good, and if they are in agreement on the matter.

One says that the sovereign good is in virtue; another sets it in pleasure; another in the knowledge of nature; another in truth: “*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*”; another in total ignorance; another in idleness; others in resisting appearances; another in admir-



ing nothing: “*Nil mirari, prope res una quae possit facere et servare beatum*”; and true Pyrrhonians in their ataraxy, doubt, and perpetual suspension; and others, more wise, think to find one a little better. That is very satisfying!

If we are obliged to see that, by such long and extended labour, this fine philosophy has gained nothing that is certain, at least it may be that the soul will know itself? Let us hear the rulers of the world on the subject. What have they thought of its substance? Have they located it more happily? What have they discovered of its origin? of its duration? of its departure?

Is it, then, that the soul is yet too sublime a subject for the feeble lights of reason? Then let us reduce it to matter. Let us see if it knows of what the body which it animates, and the others that it beholds and moves at will, are made? What have they known about it, these great dogmatists who were ignorant of nothing? “*Harum sententiarum . . .*”

That would have sufficed, no doubt, were reason reasonable. It is quite reasonable enough to own that it has not yet been able to find anything fixed; but still it does not despair of arriving at it; on the contrary, it is as keen as ever in this search, and is assured of having within itself the powers necessary for this conquest. Therefore it must be achieved, and after having examined the powers through their effects, let us recognise them in themselves; let us see whether it has any forces and any power of grasping the truth.]

☞ The sense of the hollowness of present pleasures, and ignorance of the vanity of absent pleasures, cause inconstancy.

☞ Admiration prejudices everything from infancy: “Oh, how well that was spoken! Oh, how excellently done! how wise he is!” etc. The children of Port Royal, who are not given this incentive to emulation and glory, fall into listlessness.



¶ It is dangerous to tell the people that the laws are not just, for they obey them only because they believe them to be just. This is why it is necessary to tell them at the same time that they ought to obey them because they are laws, exactly as they ought to obey their superiors, not because they are just, but because they are superiors. In that way sedition is prevented, if they can be made to understand this, and that it is properly only the definition of justice.

¶ Theology is a science, but how at the same time is it many sciences! A man is one agent; but if he is dissected, will he be the head, the heart, the stomach, the veins, each vein, each portion of vein, the blood, each humour of the blood? A town, a country, from afar, is a town and a country; but, as one approaches, they are houses, trees, tiles, leaves, herbs, ants, legs of ants . . . to infinitude; all this is comprised in the name of country.

¶ It is beyond doubt that whether the soul be mortal or immortal should make all the difference to morals, and yet philosophers have drawn up their morals independently of it: they deliberate in order to pass away an hour.

¶ Pride, counterbalancing all miseries. Either it hides them, or, if it discover them, it boasts of its acquaintance with them.

¶ *Mine, thine*: "This dog is mine," said these poor children, "this is my place in the sun." There is the beginning and the symbol of the usurpation of the whole world.

¶ As fashion makes consent, so also she makes justice.

¶ The Preacher shows that man without God knows nothing and is inevitably unhappy. For to have will and not power is to be unhappy. And though he wishes to be happy, and assured of some truth, he can neither know nor desire not to know. He cannot even doubt.



¶ The "I" is hateful. You, Miton, cloak it, but cloaking it does not eliminate it, therefore you are always hateful. "By no means, for in acting obligingly towards every one, as we do, no one has reason to hate us." True, if the "I" is hated only because of the annoyance which it causes ourselves, but if I hate it because it is unjust and makes itself the centre of everything, I shall hate it always. In short, the "I" has two characters: it is unjust in itself, in that it makes itself the centre of everything; it is irritating to others, in that it desires to make them subservient to it; for each "I" is the enemy and would like to be the tyrant of all the rest. You remove the irritation, but not the injustice, and thus you make it agreeable—not to those who hate its injustice, but only to the unjust, who no longer regard it as their enemy, and thus you are still unjust, and can please only the unjust.

¶ In proportion to our enlightenment do we discover in man more of what is great and more of what is low. Common men . . . ; those who are somewhat above them; the philosophers—(they astonish common men); Christians—(they astonish the philosophers). Who, then, will wonder that religion only makes us know thoroughly that which we recognise the more fully as we have more light?

¶ It is necessary that each of us know himself; if it is of no help in finding truth, it at least serves to order our lives, than which there is nothing more desirable.

¶ The Jews rejected Him, but not all; He was received by the holy, but not by the carnal. And so far from detracting from His glory, that was the finishing touch thereto. For their reason for rejecting Him, and the only one to be found in their writings, in the Talmud or the rabbis, is that Jesus Christ did not subdue nations with the sword, "*gladium tuum; potentissime.*" Is that all they have to say? Jesus Christ was slain, they tell us; He was overcome; He did not subdue the Gentiles by His might and give us the spoils; He bestows no riches. Is that all



they have to say? To me, it is that in which He is lovely. I would not have Him as they portray Him. It is plain that it is only His life which has hindered their accepting Him, and by their refusal they are witnesses beyond reproach, and, what is more, they thereby fulfil the prophecies.

¶ Curiosity is merely vanity. Most frequently we wish to know a thing only that we may talk about it. Otherwise, one would not make a voyage never to speak of it, and for the mere pleasure of seeing, without the hope of ever talking about it to some one.

¶ So lofty a conception have we of the human spirit, that we cannot bear to be despised by it, or to lack its esteem, and all human happiness is contained in this esteem.

¶ *Misery*: Solomon and Job have known and spoken of human misery better than any, the one the happiest, and the other the unhappiest of men; the one knowing by experience the vanity of pleasures, the other the reality of misfortune.

¶ *Misery*: The only thing which consoles us in our troubles is diversion, and yet it is the greatest trouble of all. For it is chiefly that which prevents us from thinking of ourselves, and which makes us lose [time] imperceptibly. Without it, we should be afflicted with ennui, and this ennui would drive us to seek a more effectual means of escape. But diversion beguiles us, and brings us at last insensibly to death.

¶ *Vanity*: It is marvellous that a matter so plain as the vanity of the world is so little known that it is a strange and astonishing thing to say that it is foolishness to seek worldly greatness.

¶ The power of kings is founded on reason and the folly of the people, and especially on the folly. The greatest and most important thing in the world has weakness for its foundation, and this foundation is wonderfully firm;



for there is nothing surer than that the people will be weak. That which is founded on sound reason is very unstable, such as the esteem of wisdom.

¶ The mind of this sovereign judge of the world is not so independent that he is not liable to be troubled by the least commotion about him. It does not need the report of a cannon to impede his thoughts; the sound of a weather-cock or pulley is sufficient. Do not be surprised if he cannot talk well just now; a fly is buzzing in his ears, and this is quite enough to make him incapable of giving good counsel. If you desire him to discern the truth, drive away the creature which is holding his reason in check and disturbing that powerful intelligence which governs cities and kingdoms. A fine divinity! "*O ridicolosissimo eroe!*"

¶ *Vanity of Knowledge:* The knowledge of outward things does not console me in times of affliction for ignorance of moral things; but the knowledge of moral things will always console me for the want of outward knowledge.

¶ Nevertheless, true Christians submit themselves to follies, because they respect not follies, but the order of God, who, for the punishment of men, has made them subject to those follies: "*Omnis creatura subjecta est vanitati. Liberabitur.*" Thus St. Thomas explains the saying of St. James, on the preference for the rich, that, if they do it not in the sight of God, they depart from the order of their religion.

¶ What surprises me most is that men are not astounded at their weakness. We act seriously, and each follows his profession, not because it is really good to follow it since it is customary to do so, but as if each one knew for certain where reason and right are to be found. We are deceived every moment, and by a ridiculous humility we believe it is our own fault, and not the fault of the art which we are always boasting of possessing. But it is well that there are so many of these people



in the world who are not Pyrrhonians, for the glory of Pyrrhonism: in order to show that man is quite capable of more extravagant opinions, since he is capable of believing that he is not naturally and inevitably feeble, and that on the contrary he is naturally wise.

Nothing strengthens Pyrrhonism more than that there are some who are not Pyrrhonians: were all Pyrrhonians, they would be wrong.

¶ The habit of seeing kings accompanied by guards, drummers, officers, and everything which makes for respect and awe, causes their countenances when seen alone and without these accompaniments to impress their subjects with respect and awe because they cannot separate in their minds the idea of the person from that of the suite usually attached thereto. And the world, not knowing that this effect is caused by that custom, believes that it comes from a natural strength, and hence these words, "The mark of the Divinity is imprinted on his visage," etc.

¶ Two similar faces, neither having anything laughable in itself, are laughable, when together, by their likeness.

¶ One does not choose, to steer a vessel, him among the voyagers who is of the best family.

¶ Human nature cannot be always pressing forward; it has its ebb and its flow. Fever has its chills and its heat, and the cold shows the intensity of the fever just as much as the heat. Man's inventions from century to century move in the same way. It is the same with the kindness and the malice of the world in general. "*Plerumque gratae principibus vices.*"

¶ If we are too young, we do not judge well; if too old, the same; if we think too little or too much of a thing, we lose our heads and become infatuated; if we consider our work immediately it is finished, we are still prejudiced with regard to it; if too long after, we are out of touch with it; so with pictures, seen from too far and too near. Thus there is only one indivisible point which



is the true point of view: the others are too near, too far, too high, or too low. In the art of painting, this point is determined by perspective. But in truth and in morals who shall determine it?

¶ We do not concern ourselves about being esteemed in towns we pass through, but when we stay in them for a time, we do concern ourselves about it. How long is necessary? A time proportionate to our petty and trifling span of life.

¶ The power of flies: they win battles, hinder the working of the mind, and eat our bodies.

¶ "*Ferox gens, nullam esse vitam sine armis rati.*" They like death rather than peace; the others like death rather than war. Any opinion may be preferable to the life of which the love seems so strong and so natural.

¶ This [the Christian] sect strengthens itself by its enemies rather than its friends; for the weakness of man is much more apparent in those who are not aware of it than in those who are.

¶ The rivers of Babylon rise and fall, and sweep away.
O holy Sion, where nothing falls, and all is firm!

We must sit on the waters, not beneath, or in them, but upon them, and not upright, but seated, in order that, being seated, we may be humble, and safe, being above. But in the porches of Jerusalem we shall stand erect.

See whether this pleasure is stable or transitory; if it pass, it is a river of Babylon.

¶ The law has not destroyed nature, but instructed her; grace has not destroyed the law, but fulfilled it. The faith received in baptism is the source of all the life of Christians and of the converted.

¶ There are three orders of things—the flesh, the mind, the will. Kings and the rich are the carnal, they make the body their aim. The inquiring and the learned make



the mind their aim. The wise make righteousness their aim.

God should reign over everything, and everything should be in correspondence with Him. In things of the flesh, lust has its own dominion; in matters of the mind, inquiry; in wisdom, pride. Not that we may not glory in possessions or knowledge, but these are not occasion for pride, for, while conceding to a man that he is learned, we will not cease to impress upon him that he is wrong in being arrogant. The proper occasion for pride is wisdom, for we cannot allow that a man has become wise and that he is wrong in being proud, for there pride is right. Moreover, God alone gives wisdom, and that is why "*qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur.*"

☪ *The Mystery of Jesus:* 1. Jesus in His Passions suffers the pain which men make for Him, but in the Agony He suffers the pain which he makes for Himself. "*Turbare semitipsum.*" It is anguish coming from a hand not human, but all-powerful, for He must be all-powerful to sustain it.

Jesus seeks some consolation, at least, in His three dearest friends, and they sleep. He prays them to stand by Him a little, and they desert Him completely, having so little compassion that it cannot keep them one moment from slumber. And thus Jesus was left alone before the wrath of God.

Jesus is alone on earth, which not only cannot feel and share His pain, but which may not know it. Heaven and Himself alone have this knowledge.

Jesus is in a garden; not, as was the first Adam, when he lost himself and the whole human race, in a garden of pleasures, but in a garden of agony, where He has saved Himself and the whole human race.

He suffers this pain and desertion in the awe of night.

I believe that Jesus never complained but this once, and then it was as if He were not able to contain His extreme grief. "My soul is sorrowful unto death."

Jesus seeks companionship and comfort from men. That, it seems to me, happened but this once in His



whole life. But He received neither, for His disciples slept.

Jesus will suffer until the end of the world, and meanwhile we may not sleep.

Jesus is utterly abandoned, even by the friends He chose to watch with Him; yet, finding these sleeping, He is grieved because of the peril to which they expose, not Him, but themselves, and with a cordial tenderness for them throughout their ingratitude, admonishes them for their safety and welfare, and warns them that the spirit is willing, and the flesh weak.

Jesus finding them again in sleep, from which no consideration either for Him or for themselves can keep them, has the kindness not to wake them, but leave them to rest.

Jesus prays, uncertain of His Father's will, and shrinks from death, but having known that will, He goes before to offer Himself thereto. "*Eamus. Processit.*" (John.)

Jesus has entreated men, and they have not hearkened.

Jesus, while His disciples slept, worked their salvation. For all the just, as they sleep, He does the same, both in the void before their birth, and in their sins after it.

Once only He prays that the cup may pass, but He prays with submission; and twice that it may come, if need be.

Jesus in weariness.

Jesus, seeing all His friends sleeping and all His foes watching, commits Himself wholly to His Father.

Jesus regards not the enmity of Judas, but the ordinance of God, whom He loves, and He owns it, since He calls him friend.

Jesus tears Himself from the disciples to enter upon His agony, and we must tear ourselves from our nearest and dearest that we may imitate Him.

Jesus being in agony and the greatest suffering, let us pray the longer.

ii. Not that He may leave us to repose in our sins do we implore God's mercy, but that He may deliver us from them.



If God gave us masters with His own hand, O how willingly should we obey them! The necessity and the events are infallibly such masters.

“Be comforted: thou wouldest not seek Me, hadst thou not found Me.”

“In my agony I thought of thee: such drops of blood have I shed for thee.”

“It is to tempt Me rather than to test thyself, to think how well thou wouldest do were such and such a thing absent. I will work it in thee if it come to pass.”

“Conform thyself to My rules; see how well I have guided the Virgin and the saints who let Me work in them.”

“The Father approves all that I do.”

“Wouldest thou that it always cost Me the blood of My humanity, without any tears from thee?”

“Thy conversion is My matter: fear not, and pray with confidence as for Me.”

“I am with thee by My word in the Scripture; by My Spirit in the Church, and by inspiration; by My power in the priests; by My prayer in the faithful.”

“Physicians will not heal thee, for in the end thou shalt die, but it is I who heal thee and make thy body immortal.”

“Bear with chains and bodily servitude; I as yet deliver thee but from the spiritual.”

“I am more thy friend than this one or that, for I have done for thee more than they, and they would not suffer this that I have suffered of thee, nor die for thee in the time of thy faithlessness and cruelty, as I have done, and as I am ready to do, and do, in My elect and in the Holy Sacrament.”

“Didst thou know thy sins thou wouldest lose heart.”

“I will lose it then, Lord, for I believe their malice, on Thy assurance.”

“No; for I, who teach it thee, will cure thee of these sins, and that I tell it thee is a sign that I will cure thee. In measure as thou dost expiate them, thou wilt know them, and to thee it shall be said, See the sins which are remitted to thee. Therefore do penance for thy secret



sins and for the hidden malice of the sins thou knowest.”

“Lord, I give thee all.”

“I love thee more dearly than thou hast loved thy impurities. *‘Ut immundus pro luto.’*”

“Let the glory be Mine, and not thine, worm and clay.”

“Inquire of thy director, when My words are to thee an occasion of evil, or vanity, or curiosity.”

III. I look into the gulf of my pride, curiosity, and lust. I find there no relation to God, or to Jesus Christ the righteous. But He has been made trespass for me. All thy scourges are fallen on Him, He is more abominable than I, and so far from abhorring me, He counts Himself honoured that I go to Him, and succour Him. But He has healed Himself, and with greater reason He will heal me. I must add my wounds to His, and join me to Him, and in saving Himself He will save me. But they must not be added to in the future.”

“Eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum.” Every one plays God, in judging, “This is good or bad,” and in lamenting or rejoicing too much over events.

Do small things as if they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ, who works them in us, and who lives our life; and great things as small and easy, because of His omnipotence.

Pilate’s false justice only makes Jesus Christ to suffer, for he causes Him to be scourged for his false justice, and then kills Him. It would have been better to have slain Him at first. Thus the falsely just: they do good works or evil to please the world, and show that they are not wholly for Jesus Christ, for they are ashamed of Him. And finally, in great temptations or when occasion offers, they slay Him.

¶ I behold Jesus Christ in every person and in ourselves: Jesus Christ as Father, in His Father; as Brother, in His brethren; as poor, in the poor; as rich, in the rich; as doctor and priest, in the priests; as sovereign, in princes; etc. For by His glory He is all that is great, being God, and by His mortal life all that is small and pitiful, since



He has taken this unhappy condition upon Him, that He may be in every person and a pattern for every condition.

¶ The just man acts by faith in the smallest things: when he rebukes his servants, he desires their conversion by the spirit of God, and prays God to correct them, and expects as much from God as from his reproofs, and prays God to bless his corrections.

¶ It seems to me that Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, allows only His wounds to be touched—“*Noli me tangere.*” We must be united only to His sufferings.

He presents Himself as mortal in the communion of the Last Supper, as risen to the disciples at Emmaus, as ascended into heaven to the whole Church.

¶ The inward must be joined to the outward, in order to obtain of God; that is to say, we fall on our knees and pray with our lips, that the stiff-necked man, who would not submit himself to God, be now submitted to the creature. To expect help from what is outward, is superstition; to be unwilling to join what is outward to what is inward, is pride.

¶ There are perfections in nature, to show that she is the image of God, and imperfections, to show that she is only the image.

¶ Man being accustomed, not to create merit, but only to reward it where he finds it already created, judges of God by himself.

¶ *On confessions and absolutions without marks of regret:* God regards only what is within; the Church judges only by what is without. God absolves directly He sees penitence in the heart; the Church, when she sees it in works. God will make a Church pure within, which by its inward and entirely spiritual holiness confounds the inward impiety of the proud, the wise, and the Pharisees; and the Church will make an assembly of men whose outward morals are so pure that they



confound those of the heathen. If the Church have hypocrites within her, but so well cloaked that she does not recognise the poison, she bears with them; for while they are unaccepted of God, whom they cannot deceive, they are accepted of men, whom they do deceive. Thus she is not dishonoured by their conduct, which in appearance is holy. But you would have the Church judge neither the inward, because that belongs only to God, nor the outward, because God dwells only on the inward, and so, taking from her all choice of men, you retain in the Church those who are most licentious, and who so utterly dishonour her, that the Jewish synagogue and the sects of the philosophers would have banished them as unworthy and abhorred them as impious.

€ It is true that there is pain in entering upon piety. But this pain comes not from the nascent piety, but from the impiety which is yet within us. If our senses did not set themselves against penitence, and our corruption against God's purity, it would have no pain for us. We suffer only in proportion as our natural vice resists the supernatural grace. Our heart feels torn between two contrary efforts. But it would be very wrong to impute this violence to God, who is attacking us, instead of to the world, which is holding us back. It is as if a child, whom his mother snatches from the arms of robbers, should love, in the pain he suffers, the affectionate and lawful violence of her who procures his freedom, and resent only the rough violence and tyranny of those who unjustly hold him back. The hardest war that God can allow men in this life is to leave them without the war that He is come to bring: "I am come to bring war," saith He; and, to instruct us as to this war, He says, "I am come to bring sword and fire." Before His coming, the world was living in this mistaken peace.

€ We alienate ourselves [from God] only when we alienate ourselves from charity. Before God our prayers and our righteousness are abominations, if they are not the prayers and righteousness of Jesus Christ. And our



sins will never receive God's mercy, but His justice, if they are not the sins of Jesus Christ. He has taken our sins upon Himself; and has admitted us to fellowship with Him; for to Him virtue is proper, and sin foreign, while to us virtues are foreign, and sin proper.

Let us change the standard by which we have hitherto judged of what is good. We have made this standard our own will, let us now make it God's will: all that He wills for us is just, all that He wills [not, is evil].

All which is not willed by God is forbidden. Sins are forbidden by a general declaration that God has made that He willed them not. Other things which He has left without a general prohibition and which on that account are called permitted, nevertheless are not always permitted. When God removes any of them from us, and in the event, which is a manifestation of His will, it appears that God is not willing that we should have a thing, it is then forbidden to us like sin, since it is God's will that we do not have the one any more than the other. There is this difference alone between the two things; that it is certain that God will never will sin, while it is not certain that He will never will the other. But so long as He wills it not, we must regard it as sin; for the absence of God's will, which alone is all kindness and righteousness, makes it unrighteous and evil.

¶ Jesus Christ did not wish to be slain without the forms of justice, for it is much more ignominious to die by justice than by an unjust sedition.

¶ The Christians' hope of possessing infinite happiness is mingled with present joy as well as fear; for they are not like those who would hope for a kingdom of which they are to have nothing, being subjects; but they hope for holiness and freedom from wrong, and of these they already have something.

¶ When we are led to do something by our passion, we forget duty; as, for instance, we like a book, and read it when we ought to be doing something else. But to put us in mind of our duty, we must propose to do some-



thing which we dislike; and then we excuse ourselves because we have something else to do, and thus remind ourselves of our duty.

¶ The figures used in the Gospel to express the state of the diseased soul are diseased bodies; but because one body cannot be diseased enough to express it fully, there must needs be many. Thus there is the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the paralysed, the dead Lazarus, the possessed. All these are combined in the diseased soul.

¶ I aver that if everybody knew what everybody else said about him, there would not be four friends in the world. That is evident from the quarrels which are caused by the indiscreet communications we occasionally make.

¶ . . . On that account I reject all other religions: in that way I find an answer to all objections. It is right that a God so pure should reveal Himself only to the pure-hearted. Hence this religion delights me, and I find it fully authorised by so divine a morality; but I find in it something more. I find in it a telling point that during all human remembrance it has been continuously made known to men that they are universally corrupt, but that a Restorer should come; that it is not one man who says this, but countless men, and an entire nation, prophesying and created purposely, for four thousand years.

Thus I stretch out my arms to my Deliverer, who, predicted during four thousand years, is come on earth to suffer and die for me in the time and manner foretold; and, by His grace, I await death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united with Him; and meanwhile I live in joy, whether among the blessings it may please Him to bestow on me, or the troubles which He sends for my good, and which, by His example, He has taught me to bear.

¶ I love poverty, because He loved it. I love possessions, because they afford the means of helping the unfortunate. I keep faith with every one. I return not evil to those who do evil to me, but I wish them a condition like



to mine, in which neither good nor evil is received from men. I try to be just, true, sincere, and faithful to every man, and I have a tenderness of heart towards those to whom God has joined me more closely; and, whether I be alone or in the sight of man, in all my actions I have before me God, who shall judge them, and to whom I have consecrated them all.

These are my feelings, and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has put them into my heart, and who, of a man full of weaknesses, misery, lust, pride, and ambition, has made one exempt from all these evils by the power of His grace, to which is due all the glory, as of myself I have only misery and error.

¶ We do not weary of eating and sleeping every day, for every day hunger and slumber are renewed. Thus, without hunger for spiritual things, we weary of them. Hunger for righteousness: the eighth beatitude.

¶ Everything can be fatal to us, even the things which are made for our use; for instance in nature, walls can kill us, and steps can kill us, if we do not walk exactly. The least movement affects the whole of nature: the entire sea is changed by one stone. Thus, in grace, consequences of the least action affects everything, therefore everything is important. In each action we must consider, besides the action itself, our present, past, and future states, and other things which it concerns, and see the connection between all these things, and then we shall be well restrained.

¶ *Outword works:* There is nothing so dangerous as that which pleases both God and man; for in the attitudes which please God and man there is one thing which pleases God and another thing which pleases man; as the greatness of St. Theresa: what pleases God is her deep humility in her revelations, what pleases man is her knowledge. And thus people take great pains to copy her discourse, thinking to copy her attitude, rather than to love what God loves and to put themselves into the attitude which He approves.



It is better not to fast and to be humble, than to fast and be complacent. (Pharisee, publican.)

What would it serve me to remind myself of it, if it is equally able to injure and serve me, and since all depends on God's blessing, which He gives only to the things made for Him, and according to His rules and in His way, the manner thereof thus being as important as the thing itself, and perhaps more so, since God can draw good from evil, and since, without God, we draw evil out of good?

☉ “Compare not thyself with others, but with Me. If thou findest Me not in those to whom thou comparest thyself, thou comparest thyself to what is abominable; if thou findest Me in them, compare thyself thereto. But what wilt thou compare thereto? thyself, or Me in thee? If thyself, it is an evil being; if Me, thou comparest Me to Myself for I am God in all.”

“I often speak to thee and counsel thee, because thy guide cannot speak to thee, for I would not have thee lack a leader. And maybe I do so at his prayers, and thus he leads thee without thy seeing it. Thou wouldest not seek Me if thou didst not possess Me; therefore trouble not thyself.”

☉ When in any discourse there are words repeated, and in trying to correct them we find them so suitable that by correcting them we should spoil the discourse, we must let them stand; their repetition is a mark of their fitness, and to alter them is the part of blind desire which does not know that the repetition is in this case no fault, for there is no general rule.

☉ Extreme intellect is accused of folly, like the extreme lack of it; nothing is good but mediocrity. It is the majority which has established this, and which attacks whomsoever by any means escapes from it. I am not exacting, I willingly consent to be counted as mediocre; and I refuse to be at the lower end, not because it is lower, but because it is the end; for I should equally refuse to be set at the upper end. To leave the mean is to



leave humanity: the greatness of the human mind consists in knowing how to keep there, and so far from lying in emerging from it, it lies in the fact of not emerging from it at all.

☉ [Nature has set us so exactly in the centre, that if we alter one side of the balance, we also alter the other. “*Jefesons, Tà zôa trékëi.*” That leads me to believe that there are parts in the mind which are so arranged that whatever touches the one, touches also the contrary.]

☉ [I have passed much of my life believing that there existed a justice, and in that I was not mistaken, for there is one according to what God has chosen to reveal to us. But I used not to think it so, and it is here that I deceived myself, for I believed that our justice was essentially just, and that I had some means of knowing it and judging of it. But so many times I found myself wanting in right judgment, that at last I became distrustful of myself, and then of others. I saw all countries and people changing, and thus, after so many changes of opinion on the subject of true justice, I knew that ours was but a continual changing, and since then I have changed no more, and if I changed I should confirm my opinion. (The Pyrrhonian Arcesilas who became again a dogmatist.)]

☉ [It may be that there are true demonstrations, but it is not certain. So that shows nothing, if not that there is nothing certain, but that all is uncertain—to the glory of Pyrrhonism!]

☉ [Whence comes it that this man, so afflicted by the death of his wife and of his only son, and worried by the great dispute which he has on hand, is not sad at the present moment, and that we see him so free from all these painful and disquieting thoughts? There is no need to be astonished; he has just been served a ball, and he has to send it back to his companion; he is occupied in catching it as it falls from the roof, to gain . . .

A chase—how would you have him think of his affairs when he has this other matter to attend to? See there a



business worthy to employ this great soul, and to take away from it every other thought: behold this man — born to know the universe, to judge everything, to govern a whole state — occupied and wholly engrossed with the business of taking a hare! And if he does not unbend for that purpose, and wishes to be always rigid, he will be only the more foolish, because he desires to rise above humanity, and, after all is said and done, he is only a man, — that is to say, capable of little and of much, of all, and of nothing: he is neither an angel nor a brute, but man.]

¶ “A miracle,” say some, “would strengthen my faith.” They say this when no miracle is to be seen. Reasons viewed from afar seem to form the limits of our vision, but as soon as we have come up to them, we again begin to look beyond. Nothing restrains the current of the mind. There is no rule, it is said, without exceptions, nor any truth so general but that there is some aspect from whence it is deficient. It is enough that it be not absolutely universal, to give us grounds for applying the exception to the present subject and saying, “That is not true always, therefore there are cases where it is not true.” It only remains to show that this is one of them, and this is why one is either very clumsy or very unfortunate if one does not find some light.

¶ Languages are ciphers, in which letters are not changed into letters, but words into words; so that an unknown language is decipherable.

¶ Diversity is as manifold as the tones of the voice, every different gait, cough, blowing of the nose, sneeze. We distinguish grapes among fruits, and again we call these . . . and then Condrieu, and then Desargues, and then this graft. Is this all? has it ever produced two clusters alike? and has one cluster two similar berries? I do not know how to judge of the same thing exactly in the same way. I cannot judge of work while doing it; I must do as painters do, and move back, though not too far. How far then? Guess.



¶ The true and only virtue, therefore, is to hate ourselves (for by our lust we are hateful) and to seek a truly lovable being, in order to love him. But, as we cannot love what is outside ourselves, we must love something which is within, and yet which is not we, and this is true of every man. Now it is only the Universal Being who can be such a one. The kingdom of God is within us: universal good is within us, is ourselves, and is not ourselves.

¶ All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life: “*libido sentiendi, libido sciendi, libido dominandi.*” Unhappy is the accursed land, inflamed, rather than watered, by these three rivers of fire! Happy they, who being on these rivers—not immersed or carried away, but fixed and stable, seated, not standing, on a low and secure seat whence they rise not before the light, but after reposing there in peace — extend their hand to Him who is to raise them and make them stand erect and firm in the porches of the holy Jerusalem, where pride shall no more be able to attack them and cast them down; and who in the meantime weep, not to see all the perishable things drifting away and carried off by the torrent, but at the remembrance of their dear country, of the heavenly Jerusalem, of which, in the weariness of their exile, they think constantly.

¶ The elect will not know their virtues, or the reprobate the greatness of their crimes. “Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or thirsty?” etc.

¶ Jesus Christ has never condemned without a hearing: to Judas, “*Amice, ad quid venisti?*” and the same to him that had not the wedding garment.

¶ *Sepulchre of Jesus Christ:* Jesus Christ was dead, but seen, upon the cross. In the sepulchre He is dead and hidden.

Jesus Christ was buried only by saints.

Jesus Christ wrought no miracles in the tomb.



Only saints entered therein.

It is there that Jesus Christ takes a new life, not on the cross.

It is the last mystery of the Passion and the Redemption.

Jesus Christ had not on earth where to lay His head, except the tomb.

Only when He was in the tomb did His enemies cease to persecute him.

¶ *Why God has established Prayer:* 1. To communicate to His creatures the dignity of causality. 2. To teach us from whom we hold virtue. 3. To make us worthy of other virtues by endeavour. But, to keep its pre-eminence for Himself, He gives prayer to whomsoever it pleases Him.

Objection: "But people will think that they of themselves have power to pray." This is absurd, for since, having faith, they cannot have virtues, how should they have faith? Is there not more distance between infidelity and faith, than between faith and virtue?

¶ *Diversion:* As men have been unable to cure death, misery, ignorance, they have bethought themselves to ignore them, so as to be happy.

¶ In spite of these miseries, man wishes to be happy, and only wishes to be happy, and is unable not to wish to be so; but how will he go to work? To do it properly, he must make himself immortal; but, as he cannot do so, it has occurred to him to prevent himself from thinking of them.

¶ It is not possible to reasonably disbelieve miracles.

¶ The pope is premier. What other is known by all? What other is acknowledged by all, having power to introduce into the whole body — since he holds the main branch — that which works its way everywhere? How easy it is to degrade this to tyranny! That is why Jesus Christ has laid down for them this precept: "*Vos autem non sic.*"



¶ Jesus Christ typified by Joseph: beloved of His Father, sent by the Father to seek His brethren, etc., innocent, sold by His brethren for twenty pieces of silver, and by that become their Lord, their Saviour, and the Saviour of strangers, and of the world: which would not have been except for their plot to get rid of Him, and the sale and the reproof they made of Him.

In prison, Joseph innocent between two criminals; Jesus Christ, on the cross, between two malefactors. He foretold salvation to the one and death to the other from the same signs; Jesus Christ saves the elect, and condemns the reprobate for the same crimes. Joseph only foretold; Jesus Christ fulfils. Joseph asks him who is to be saved to remember him when he is exalted; and he whom Jesus Christ saves asks of Him that He will remember him when He shall come to His kingdom.

¶ Symmetry is what we see at a glance, founded on the fact of there being no reason to do otherwise, and founded also on the human figure; whence it is that we wish for symmetry only in breadth, not in height or depth.

¶ I am aware that I might not have existed; for the “I” consists in my thought; therefore I who think would not have been had my mother been killed before I received life; therefore I am not a necessary being. Moreover, I am neither eternal nor infinite, but I see plainly that there is in nature one being who is necessary, eternal, and infinite.

¶ Pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Temptation is dangerous, and those who are tempted, are tempted because they do not pray.

“*Et tu conversus confirma fratres tuos.*” But [afterwards] “*conversus Jesus respexit Petrum.*”

St. Peter asks permission to smite Malchus, and strikes before hearing the answer, and Jesus Christ replies afterwards.

The word Galilee, which the Jewish crowd uttered as if by chance when accusing Jesus Christ before Pilate,



made Pilate send Jesus Christ to Herod; by which was accomplished the mystery that He should be judged by the Jews and by the Gentiles. The seeming chance was the cause of the accomplishment of the mystery.

¶ By a fanciful estimate, imagination magnifies small objects until she fills the mind with them, and by a daring insolence she reduces great ones to our own measure, as when speaking of God.

¶ “*Lustravit lampade terras.*” The weather and my humour have little to do with each other. I have my fog and my sunshine within me, and even the well or ill going of my affairs makes little difference. I sometimes exert myself against [mis]fortune, and the glory of mastering it makes me master it cheerfully; while, on the other hand, with good fortune I play the fastidious.

¶ They say that eclipses betoken misfortune, because misfortunes are common, and evil happens so often, that it can frequently be foretold; while if they said that they betokened good luck, they would very often lie. They ascribe good luck only to rare occurrences in the heavens; thus they seldom fail to guess aright.

¶ They who make antitheses by forcing words are like those who make false windows for the sake of symmetry; their rule is not to speak accurately, but to make accurate figures.

¶ There is a certain style of pleasure and beauty which consists in a certain harmony between our nature — whether it be feeble or strong — and the thing which pleases us. All which is formed according to this style delights us, whether house, or song, or discourse, or verse, or prose, or woman, or birds, or rivers, or trees, or rooms, or clothes, etc.; all which is not after this style offends those who have good taste. And as there is a perfect harmony between a song and a house made on this good model, because both follow a unique pattern, though each in its own way, there is a similar harmony between things made on a bad model. Not that the bad



model is unique, for there are many such, but every bad sonnet, for example, upon whatever false model it be made, exactly resembles a woman dressed in this style. Nothing shows better how ridiculous a bad sonnet is, than to consider its nature and its model, and then to imagine a woman or a house formed on these lines.

¶ As people speak of “poetical beauty,” so ought they to speak of “geometrical beauty,” or “medicinal beauty.” But they do not, for the reason that they know exactly what is the object of geometry, and that it consists of proofs, and the object of medicine, which is healing, but they do not know wherein lies the charm which is the aim of poetry. They do not know what this natural model is which they should copy, and for want of this knowledge they have invented certain strange terms—“golden age,” “marvel of our days,” “fatal,” etc., and call this jargon “poetic beauty.” But he who will picture to himself a woman after this style — which consists in saying little things in big words — will see a pretty girl covered with mirrors and chains, at which he will laugh, because it is better known wherein lies the charm of a woman than what comprises the charm of verses. But those who do not know that will admire her in this guise, and there are many villages where she would be taken for the queen; and this is why we call sonnets made on this pattern “village queens.”

¶ Nobody passes as a judge of poetry if he has not set himself up as a poet, or a mathematician, etc. But universal people do not wish to set themselves up as anything, and make very little difference between the profession of a poet and that of an embroiderer.

Universal people are called neither poets nor geometers, etc., but they are all these and judge of all these. They are not to be recognised intuitively. They will talk of what is being talked of when they enter. No one quality is more remarkable in them than another, except that called forth by the occasion, but then they are remembered, for it is equally characteristic of them that



people do not remark that they speak well, when speaking is not in question, and remark that they do speak well, when it is in question.

Therefore it is false praise to say of a man, as he enters, that he is very skilful in poetry; and it is a bad sign when we have not recourse to a man when it is a question of judging some verses.

¶ If we must do nothing except for what is certain, we should do nothing for religion, for religion is not certain. But how many things are done for the uncertain,—seavoyages, battles! Therefore I aver that we must needs do nothing at all, since nothing is certain; and that there is more certainty in religion than that we may see tomorrow dawn, for this is not certain, but it certainly is possible that we may not see it. We cannot say as much for religion. It is not certain that it exists, but who will dare to say that it certainly is possible that it does not exist? So when we labour for the morrow, and for the uncertain, we do reasonably, for, by the demonstrated law of probabilities, we ought to labour for the uncertain.

St. Augustine saw that we work for the uncertain, on the sea, in battle, etc.; he did not see the law of chances, which demonstrates that we ought to do so. Montaigne saw that we are offended by a halting mind, and that custom can compass anything, but he did not see why. All these people saw the effects, but not the causes; and with regard to those who have discovered the causes, they are as those who have only eyes with regard to those who have intelligence, for effects are as though perceptible to the senses, while causes are visible only to the mind. And although these effects are perceived by the mind, this mind, compared to one which sees the causes, is as the bodily senses compared to the mind.

¶ All our reasoning has to yield to sentiment. But fancy is both like and unlike sentiment, so that we cannot distinguish between these contradictions. One says my sentiment is fancy, the other that his fancy is sentiment. A guide is wanted. Reason offers itself, but reason is pliable to every sense, and thus there is none.



¶ *Diversion*: Sometimes when I have set myself to consider the various directions in which men are moved, and the perils and pains to which they expose themselves, at court, in war, from whence arise so many quarrels, passions, and bold and often evil enterprises, etc., I have discovered that all human misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to remain quietly in one room. A man who has sufficient means to live, if he knew how to stay at home happily, would not go forth to go on the sea or to a siege. No one would buy a commission in the army so dearly were it not intolerable not to stir out of the town, and no one would seek conversation and the amusement of games but that no one can with pleasure remain in his own house.

But when, in looking closer, and after having found the cause of all our misfortunes, I have desired to discover its reason, I have found that there is one very potent reason for it, that is, the unhappiness natural to our weak and mortal condition, a condition so miserable that when we think deeply about it, nothing can console us.

Whatever condition we picture to ourselves, if we think of all the good things which might be ours, royalty is the finest in the world; and yet, let any one imagine himself royal and surrounded by every possible gratification, and if he is without amusement and left to consider and reflect upon what he is, this languid felicity will not sustain him, he will of necessity fall a-thinking of the things which threaten him, revolts which might arise, and at length of death and sickness, which are inevitable; so that if he have not what is called diversion, he will be unhappy, and more than the least of his subjects who plays and diverts himself.

It is on this account that the play, and the conversation of women, war, and great occupations, are in such request. It is not that there is really any happiness in them, or that any one imagines that any true gratification is afforded by having the money which may be gained at play, or by the hare which he chases: he would not have them if they were offered. It is not this mild and peaceful possession, which allows us to think of our



wretched condition, which is in view, or the dangers of the war, or the anxiety of occupation, but the bustle which distracts our thoughts and keeps us amused. (The reason why we like the chase better than the capture.)

Thence it comes that men love so much tumult and movement; thence it is that prison is so horrible a torture; thence it is that the pleasure of solitude is incomprehensible. And, in short, it is the strongest reason for the happiness of kings, that unceasing endeavours are made to divert them and procure for them all sorts of pleasures. (The king is surrounded by people whose only care is to amuse him and prevent him from thinking of himself: for if he do so, he will be unhappy, although a king.)

See how much man has been able to devise to make himself happy. And those who build philosophies thereon, and who believe that people are well-nigh unreasonable to pass the whole day in chasing a hare which they would not buy, hardly know our nature. This hare would not secure us against the sight of death and misery (who can save us from these?), but the chase does secure us against it.

The counsel they gave to Pyrrhus to take the repose he was about to seek by means of many fatigues, admits of plenty of difficulties.

And so when men are reproached that that which they seek so eagerly cannot satisfy them, if they answer (as they should, if they have well pondered it) that they seek only a violent and energetic occupation, which diverts them from thoughts of themselves, and that that is why they set up an object of attraction which delights them and draws them powerfully, they would leave their opponents without a reply. But they do not answer thus, because they do not know themselves. They are unaware that it is the chase alone, and not the capture, which they desire.

(The dance: one must consider well where to set one's feet. The gentleman sincerely believes that the chase is a great and royal pleasure, but the huntsman is not of the same mind.)



They imagine that having gained their object they would then take their ease and enjoy it, and are not aware of the insatiable nature of their desire. They sincerely believe they are seeking repose when, in truth, they seek only agitation.

They have one secret instinct leading them to seek distraction and occupation without, which comes from the consciousness of their continual miseries; and another, which is a remnant of the greatness of our first nature, telling them that happiness, after all, is found only in repose, and not in tumult; and with these two conflicting instincts, they form within themselves a confused plan, which, hidden from sight in the depth of their soul, leads them to approach repose by agitation and to imagine always that the satisfaction they have not will come, if, by surmounting certain difficulties which confront them, they can by this means open for themselves the door to repose.

So life glides on. We seek rest by combating certain difficulties, and when these are conquered, rest becomes intolerable, for we think either of the troubles we have, or of those we might have. And even were we protected on all sides, ennui, on its own initiative, would never weary of sallying forth from the depths of the heart, where it is naturally rooted, and filling the mind with its poison.

Thus man is so unfortunate, that he would be wearied even without cause for weariness, by the very nature of his composition; and so vain, that having within him a thousand essential causes of ennui, the least trifle, such as a billiard table and a ball to drive, suffices to distract him.

“But,” you will say, “what is his object in all this?” That of boasting to-morrow among his friends that he has played better than somebody else. In the same way others toil in their studies, that they may show the learned that they have solved a question of algebra which has never been solved hitherto; and many others expose themselves to the greatest perils in order to boast of some place they have taken,—quite as foolishly, in my opinion; and finally, others again take enormous pains



to observe these things, not to become more wise by so doing, but merely to show that they know them, and they are the most foolish of all, since they are foolish knowingly, whereas we can call to mind others who would be foolish no longer, did they possess this knowledge.

So-and-so passes his life without tedium by playing for a little every day. Give him every morning the amount of his daily winnings, on condition that he do not play,—you make him unhappy. Perhaps it will be said that it is the amusement of the game that he seeks, and not the gain. Then make him play for nothing, and he will not warm to the game, but grow tired of it.

Therefore it is not amusement only that he seeks; a languid and passionless amusement will weary him. He must warm to it, and delude himself by imagining he would be happy if he gained that which he would not have were it given to him on condition that he played no more; in order that he may make for himself an object of passion, and thereby excite his desire, his anger, his fear, for this object, just as children are afraid of the face that they have bedaubed.

Whence comes it, that this man, who a few months since lost his only son, and who, burdened with lawsuits and disputes, was this morning so harassed, thinks of these things no longer? Do not marvel thereat; he is entirely taken up with seeing which way this wild boar, which the dogs have been hotly pursuing for six hours, will pass. No more is wanted: if man, however full of sadness he be, can be prevailed upon to enter on some diversion, he will be happy for the time being; and if man, however happy he be, is not diverted and occupied by some passion or amusement, which prevents ennui from asserting itself, he will soon be discontented and unhappy.

Without diversion, there is no joy; with diversion, there is no sadness. And in this way is made up the happiness of great personages, who have a number of people who amuse them, and who can keep them amused. Mark this. What is it to be superintendent, chancellor, or



first president, but to be in a position to have from the first thing in the morning a large number of people who come from all parts so as not to leave them one hour in the day in which to think of themselves? And when they are disgraced, and sent to their country houses, where they lack neither means nor servants to help them in their need, they do not cease to be wretched and forlorn, because no one prevents them from thinking of themselves.

¶ Montaigne is wrong: custom ought to be followed only because it is custom, and not because it is reasonable or just; but the people follow it only for the reason that they believe it to be just, otherwise they would not follow it, although it were custom, because no one would desire to be subjected to anything but reason or justice. Without that, custom would pass for tyranny, but the rule of reason and justice is not more tyrannical than that of delectation; these are the principles natural to man. Therefore it would be well if we obeyed laws and customs because they are laws; it would be well if we were aware that none of them are true and right to introduce, and that we know nothing about them, and that accordingly we must follow only those that are received; in this way we should never depart from them. But the people are not able to accept this doctrine, and as they believe that truth can be found, and that in the laws and customs, they follow these and take their antiquity as a proof of their truth (and not of their mere authority without truth). Thus they obey them; but they are liable to rebel as soon as they are shown that these laws and customs are worth nothing — which can be shown of everything, by regarding it from a certain standpoint.

¶ Evil is easy, there is an infinity of it; the good is almost unique. But a certain sort of evil is as difficult to find as that which people call good, on which account this particular evil is often made to pass as good. It even needs an extraordinary greatness of soul to arrive at it, just as much as at the good.



¶ If we wish to prove the examples we use to prove other things, we use the other things as proofs of the examples; for as we always think that the difficulty lies in that which we desire to prove, we find the examples clearer and more useful in showing it. Thus, when we wish to show a general thing, we must give the rule for a particular case, but if we wish to show a particular case, we must begin with the [general] rule. For we always find the thing we wish to prove, obscure, and that which we use to prove it, clear; for when we propose a thing to be proved, we first occupy our mind with the idea that it is therefore obscure, and, on the other hand, that that which ought to prove it is clear, and thus we understand it easily.

¶ How difficult it is to offer a thing for the consideration of another, without influencing his judgment by the manner of proposing it! If we say, "I consider it beautiful; I consider it obscure," or anything of the kind, we persuade his imagination to this opinion, or excite it to the contrary. It is better to say nothing, and then he judges it according to what it is, that is to say, according to what it is then, and according as other circumstances with which we have nothing to do shall have disposed it. At any rate we shall not have affected it in any way, unless our silence also has its effect, according to the turn and the meaning that he may be in the mood to give to it, or as he may conjecture it from our looks, or expression, or tone of voice, if he be a physiognomist: so easy is it to depose a judgment from its natural position, or, rather, so little is there in opinion which is firm and stable.

¶ *Pyrrhonism*: I shall here set down my thoughts without any order, and yet perhaps not in a wholly aimless confusion; this is the true order, and by its very irregularity it will always show my intention. I should do my subject too much honour did I treat it in order, since I wish to show that it is incapable of being so treated.

We do not think of Plato and Aristotle except as in the long gowns of pedants. They were worthy men, and



laughed with their friends like the rest. And when they amused themselves by making their "LAWS" and their "POLITICS," they did so as a pastime. It was the least philosophical and least serious part of their life: the most philosophical was to live simply and peacefully. If they wrote of politics, it was as if to regulate a hospital for madmen. And if they pretended to speak of it as of an important matter, it was because they knew that the madmen whom they were addressing thought to be kings and emperors. They entered into their principles in order to reduce their folly to the least possible evil.

☉ Those who judge of a work by rule are, with regard to others, as those who have a watch with regard to those who have not: the one says, "It is two hours"; the other says, "It is only three-quarters of an hour"; I look at my watch, and I say to the one, "You grow weary," and to the other, "With you the time passes lightly," for it is but an hour and a half, and I laugh at those who tell me that the time weighs upon my hands, and that I judge of it by imagination; they do not know that I tell it by my watch.

☉ There are some vices which hold us only by means of others, and which, if we take away their trunk, are carried off like branches.

☉ When malignity has reason on its side, it becomes arrogant, and parades reason in all its glory: when austerity or severe choice has not succeeded in the true good, and has to return to following nature, it becomes proud by reason of this return.

☉ There is a universal and essential difference between the actions of the will and all other action. The will is one of the principal organs of belief; not because it forms belief, but because things are true or false according to the side from which they are viewed. The will, which likes one side better than the other, dissuades the mind from considering the qualities of those which it does not care to see; and thus the mind, walking abreast



of the will, stops to observe the aspect which pleases the will, and judges of the thing by what it sees there.

€ All good maxims are already in existence, the only thing needed is to apply them. For example:

No one doubts that one ought to risk one's life for the public good, and many do it, but for religion—by no means.

There must be inequality among men;—that is true, but having granted it, the door is at once open not only to the highest domination, but to the highest tyranny.

It is necessary to relax the mind somewhat;—but that opens the door to the greatest excesses.

Let their limits be marked! Things have no limits; the laws would assign them, and the mind cannot tolerate them.

€ Eloquence is a painting of thought; and thus those who after having painted add more to it, make a picture instead of a portrait.

€ *Diversion*: It is easier to suffer death without thinking of it, than the thought of death without peril.

€ Force is the queen of the world, and not opinion, but opinion is that which makes use of force. It is force which makes opinion. Weakness, in our opinion, is becoming. Why? Because he who will wish to dance the tight-rope will be alone, and I will make a stronger cabal of people who will say that it is not becoming.

€ The things which occupy us most, such as hiding our small means, are frequently almost nothing at all: this is a mole-hill which our imagination magnifies into a mountain; one more turn of imagination and we should reveal it without difficulty.

€ There are only two sorts of men: those who are righteous and think themselves sinners, and those who are sinners and think themselves righteous.

€ Faith is a gift of God. Believe not that we said it was a gift of reason. The other religions do not say that of



their faith; they only give the reasoning for arriving at it, which, nevertheless, does not lead to it.

¶ There are some who speak well but do not write well. It is because the occasion and the company warm them, and extract from their minds more than they would find there without this warmth.

¶ . . . And yet this Testament, made to confuse some and to enlighten others, marked in those whom it confused, the truth which was to be known by the others. For the visible good things which they received from God were so great and so divine, that it was manifest that He was able to give those which were invisible, and the Messiah.

For nature is the image of grace, and the visible miracles are the image of the invisible. "*Ut sciatis . . . , tibi dico: Surge.*" (Isaiah li. says that the Redemption will be known as the passing of the Red Sea.)

God therefore has shown, in the exodus from Egypt, the sea, the defeat of the king, the manna, in all the genealogy of Abraham, that He was able to save, and to send down bread from heaven, etc.; so that the hostile people is the type and the representation of the very Messiah that they know not, etc. Then, finally, He has taught us that all these things were but figures, and the meaning of "truly free," "true Israelite," "true circumcision," "true bread from heaven," etc.

In these promises every man will find what he has at heart, either temporal blessings or spiritual blessings, God or the creatures; but with this distinction, that those who seek there for the creatures will find them, but with many contradictions, with the love of them forbidden, with the command to worship God alone, and to love none but Him (which is the same thing), and lastly, they will find that for them no Messiah has come; while those who seek God there will find Him, and without contradiction, with the command to love Him alone, and that a Messiah has come in the time foretold to give them the blessings they asked.

Thus the Jews had miracles, and prophecies which



they saw accomplished; and the doctrine of their law was to worship and love but one God. Thus it was perpetual. Thus it had all the marks of true religion; thus it was the true religion. But we must distinguish between the doctrine of the Jews and the doctrine of the law of the Jews. For the doctrine of the Jews was not true, although it had miracles, prophecies, and perpetuity, for the reason that it had not the other principle—that of worshipping and loving God alone.

¶ Is not the dignity of royalty sufficiently great of itself to render its possessor happy through mere self-contemplation? Is it necessary to divert him from the thought of himself, as in the case of ordinary folk? I see plainly that to turn a man from the consideration of his domestic troubles and to occupy his thoughts with the care of dancing well, is to make him happy. . . . But will it be the same with a king, and will he be happier in devoting himself to these empty amusements than in contemplating his greatness? What more satisfying food for thought could he be given? Would it not spoil his pleasure to employ his mind in thinking of the adjustment of his steps to the sound of a melody, or in skilfully placing a ball, instead of leaving him to enjoy peacefully the contemplation of the glory of the majesty which surrounds him? Let it be put to the test: let a king be left alone, without anything to gratify the senses, without any occupation for the mind, without companions, to think of himself at his leisure, and it will be seen that a king without diversion is a man full of miseries. Thus his attendants carefully avoid leaving a king to himself, and there is never wanting about the persons of kings a large number of people who take care that pleasure succeeds business, and who mark their every leisure moment in order to supply them with pleasures and pastimes, so that there is never a gap—that is, they are surrounded by people who take marvellous pains to see that the king be not alone and in a position to think of himself, knowing that if he do so he will be unhappy, although a king.



I do not speak here of Christian kings as Christians, but as kings.

¶ What a difference between a soldier and a Carthusian in the matter of obedience! For they are equally obedient and dependent, and equally painstaking in their work. But the soldier is always hoping to become master (and never becomes so, for even captains and princes are always slaves and dependents, but he hopes on, and constantly works to that end), while the Carthusian vows to be ever in subjection. Thus, they do not differ as to the perpetual servitude which is always the lot of both, but in the hope which the one has continually, and the other never.

¶ To be a member is to have life, being, and movement only by the spirit of the body and for the body.

The separated member, no longer in company with the body to which it belongs, has no more than a decaying and dying existence. Yet it thinks itself a whole, and no longer seeing anybody on which it depends, it believes it depends only on itself, and desires to make itself its centre and body. But not having within it the vital principle, it can but go astray, and wonder in the uncertainty of its being, feeling indeed that it is not the body, and yet not seeing that it is a member of the body. And then when it comes to self-knowledge, it is as if returned to its home, and no longer loves itself except for the whole body; it laments its past errors.

From its nature it cannot love any other thing except for itself and to serve itself, because everything loves itself above all. But in loving the body, it loves itself, because it has no existence except in the body, by the body, and for the body.

The body loves the hand, and the hand, if it had a will, ought to love itself in the same way that the soul loves it; all love which is more than this is wrong.

“*Adhaerens Dea unus Spiritus est.*” Each loves himself because he is a member of Jesus Christ. Each loves Jesus Christ because He is the Body of which we are members. All is one, and the one is in the other, as the Trinity.



¶ God, having made a heaven and an earth which felt not the gladness of their existence, wished to create beings who should know this gladness, and who might make up a body of thinking members. For our members do not feel the happiness of their union, of their marvellous harmony, of nature's care to influence our minds therewith and to make them grow and endure. How happy would they be, did they feel it and see it! But for that they need intelligence, and readiness to consent to the will of the universal mind. Only if, having received intelligence, they used it merely to retain nourishment for themselves, without allowing it to pass to the other members, they would not only be unjust, but miserable as well, and would hate rather than love themselves, as their blessedness, as well as their duty, consists in consenting to the guidance of the one mind to which they belong, which loves them better than they love themselves.

¶ *God by Jesus Christ:* We know God only by Jesus Christ. Without this Mediator, all communication with God is cut off; through Jesus Christ we know God. All those who have claimed to know God and to prove Him without Jesus Christ have only useless proofs. But we, to prove Jesus Christ, have the prophecies which are solid and palpable proofs. And the prophecies, being accomplished, and proved real by the event, mark the certainty of these truths, and thus, the proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In Him and by Him, then, we know God. Except for that, and without Scripture, without original sin, without a necessary Mediator foretold and come, we can neither absolutely prove God, nor teach good doctrine or good morals. But by Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, God is proved, and morality and doctrine are taught. Jesus Christ is therefore the veritable God of men. But at the same time we know our wretchedness, for this God is He who is our restorer in our misery. So we can know God perfectly only by knowing our iniquities.

Thus those who have known God without knowing



their misery have not glorified Him, but have glorified themselves in their miseries. “*Quia . . . non cognovit per sapientiam . . . placuit Deo per stultitiam praedicationis salvos facere [credentes].*”

¶ The world judges of things well, for it is in a state of natural ignorance, which is the true human wisdom. Knowledge has two extremes, which meet. The first is the pure natural ignorance of all men at their birth. The other is that reached by those lofty souls who, having traversed all human knowledge, find that they know nothing, and that they are in the same ignorance from which they set out, but it is a learned ignorance, which knows itself. Those between the two, who have left natural ignorance and cannot arrive at the other, have some tinge of this sufficing knowledge, and form the intelligent. These disturb the world and judge wrongly of everything. The people and the clever make up the bulk of the community: these others despise them, and are despised by them. They judge of everything ill, and the world judges of everything well.

¶ *Objection:* “The Scripture is obviously full of things not dictated by the Holy Spirit.” *Reply:* They do not harm faith on that account.

¶ *Objection:* “But the Church has decided that all is from the Holy Spirit.” *Reply:* I answer two things: first, that the Church never decided that; and secondly, that if she had decided it, it could have been maintained.

¶ It is false piety to preserve peace at the expense of truth, and false zeal to preserve truth by wounding charity.

¶ It is odd to think that there are people who, having renounced every law of God and of nature, have made others for themselves which they observe exactly, as, for example, the soldiers of Mahomet, thieves, heretics, etc.; and also the logicians. It seems that their licence should have no bounds or barriers at all, seeing that they have overstepped so many which are so just and so holy.



¶ *Greatness of Man:* The greatness of man is so plain, that it deduces itself even from his misery. For that which is nature in animals we call misery in man, from whence we see that as his nature to-day is like to that of the animals, he is fallen from a better nature which at one time he possessed.

For who thinks himself unhappy because he is not a king, except a deposed king? Was Paul Emilius unhappy at being no longer consul? On the contrary, every one considered him happy in having been consul, because he was not of the rank to have been so always. But Perseus was held so unfortunate in being no longer king, because according to his rank he should have been king always, that it was considered strange that he could endure his life. Who is unhappy at having but one mouth? and who would not consider himself unfortunate in having but one eye? No one, perhaps, ever takes it into his head to lament that he has not three eyes; but anybody would be inconsolable at having no eyes at all.

¶ Sneezing absorbs all the faculties of the mind quite as much as work does, but we do not draw therefrom the same inference against the greatness of man, because it is in spite of himself. And although he procures the sneeze himself, nevertheless it is in spite of himself that he procures it, and the actual sneeze is not the object in view: it is for another end, and thus it is only a mark of man's weakness and his dependence on this action.

It is not shameful for man to yield to sadness, and it is shameful for him to yield to pleasure. This is not because sorrow comes from without, while pleasure is sought, for we can seek sorrow and designedly yield to it without this kind of baseness. How then does it happen that it is glorious to the reason to yield under the pressure of sorrow, and shameful to yield under the pressure of pleasure? It is because it is not sorrow which tempts and attracts us, but ourselves who voluntarily choose and desire to give it dominion over us, so that we are masters of it, and thus it is man yielding to himself; but in pleasure, it is man yielding to pleasure. It is mastery



and dominion alone which make glory, and servitude alone which makes shame.

¶ “*Summum jus, summa injuria.*”—The majority is the best way, because it is visible, and has the power to make itself obeyed; nevertheless it is the opinion of the less capable.

Had it been possible, force would have been put into the hands of justice; but since we cannot handle force as we wish, because it is a tangible quality, while justice is a spiritual quality of which we dispose as we please, justice has been put into the hands of force, and thus we call that which we are absolutely bound to observe, just. Hence the right of the sword, for the sword confers a real right; otherwise we should see violence on the one side and justice on the other. (End of the twelfth PROVINCIAL.) Hence the injustice of the Fronde, which sets up its so-called justice in opposition to force. It is not so in the Church, for there is a true justice and no violence.

¶ Man’s misery being inferred from his greatness, and his greatness from his misery, some have inferred the misery the more forcibly because they have taken it as proof of greatness; and others inferring the greatness the more forcibly because they have deduced it from that same misery, all that the first have been able to say to show the greatness has served only as an argument for others to conclude the misery, since to have fallen from a higher state is to be the more wretched, and *vice versâ*. They pursue each other in an unending circle, being certain that in proportion to men’s enlightenment they find both greatness and misery in man. In short, man knows that he is miserable; therefore being miserable, he is miserable; yet since he knows it, he is very great.

¶ *Submission:* We must know how to doubt when it is necessary, and to make sure when it is necessary, by submitting when it is necessary.

He who does not act thus does not understand the force of reason. There are some who err against these



three principles, either by affirming all as demonstrable, for lack of understanding demonstration; or by doubting everything, for lack of knowing when to submit; or by submitting in everything, for lack of knowing where to use judgment.

¶ The examples of the noble deaths of the Lacedaemonians and others hardly affect us, for what have they brought us? But the example of the death of the martyrs does affect us, for they are “our members.” We have a common bond with them; their fortitude can make ours, not only by example, but, may be, because it deserves it. There is nothing of that kind in the example of the pagans; we have nothing in common with them; just as one is not the richer for a stranger’s wealth, but for a father’s or husband’s.

¶ Greatness of what is established: respect for establishment. The pleasure of the rich is the power to make people happy; the use of wealth is to be given liberally: the use of everything ought to be sought for. The use of power is to protect.

¶ *Martial’s Epigram*: Man loves malignity, not against the obscure or unfortunate, but against the prosperous and haughty: otherwise he deceives himself. For the source of all our motives is concupiscence, and humanity, etc. . . . It is necessary to please those of humane and tender feelings.

That of the two blind people is worth nothing, because it does not console them, but merely adds a trifle to the glory of the author. All which is only for the author is valueless: “*Ambitiosa recidet ornamenta.*”

¶ It is not an uncommon thing to have to rebuke people for over-much docility. There is a vice as natural as incredulity, and quite as pernicious—superstition.

¶ What are our natural principles, if not our habitual principles, and, in children, those which they have received from their father’s custom, as the chase in animals? A different custom will give us other natural principles.



This is seen by experience; and if there are natural principles ineffaceable by habit, there are also principles of habit contrary to nature, not to be effaced by nature and another habit; that depends on the disposition.

¶ *Thinking reed:* It is not from space that I must seek my dignity, but in the regulation of my thought. The possession of worlds would not give me more than this; with space the universe encloses me and engulfs me like an atom, but with thought I enclose the universe.

¶ Man is great, inasmuch as he knows that he is miserable; a tree does not know that it is miserable. Therefore, to be miserable is to know one's self to be so, but to know one's self to be miserable is to be great.

¶ The only universal rules are the laws of the land in ordinary things, and the majority in others. Whence comes this? From the strength which is in a majority. And thus it is that kings, who have other power besides, do not follow the majority of their ministers.

Doubtless the equality of property is just, but since it is impossible to make it strong to obey justice, it has been made just to obey strength; as justice cannot be fortified, force has been justified, in order that justice and force might go together, and that there might be peace, which is the sovereign good.

¶ Wisdom sends us to childhood, "*nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli.*"

¶ As dukedoms and royalty and magistracies are actual and necessary, because strength rules everything, they exist everywhere and always. But because it is only caprice which makes such-and-such a thing be so, that thing is not constant, but is liable to vary, etc.

¶ It is just that whatever is just be followed: it is necessary that whatever is strongest be followed. Justice without strength is powerless; strength without justice is tyrannical. Justice without strength is defied, because there are always wrongdoers; strength without justice is



indicted. Justice and strength, then, must be put together, and, in order to do this, that which is just must be made strong, and that which is strong, just.

Justice is liable to be called into question: force is unmistakable and indisputable. Thus we have not been able to give force to justice, because force has defied justice, and called it unjust, and said that it was itself which was just; and so, being unable to make that which is just, strong, we have made that which is strong, just.

€ *Geometry, finesse*: True eloquence laughs at eloquence; true morality laughs at morality; that is to say, the morality of the judgment laughs at the morality of the mind, which has no rules. For to judgment belongs intuition, as knowledge belongs to the mind. Subtlety is a matter of the judgment, geometry of the mind.

To laugh at philosophy is to be a true philosopher.

€ Men are taught everything but honesty, and they never pride themselves on knowing anything so well as how to be honest. They pride themselves only on knowing the one thing they have never learned.

€ Children who are afraid of the face they have daubed, are children; but how can man, who is so weak when a child, be very strong when older? We change only in imagination. All which is perfected by progress perishes by progress. Nothing which has been weak will ever be absolutely strong. It is vainly said, "He is grown; he is changed," for he is still the same.

€ Two extremes: to exclude reason, and to admit nothing but reason.

€ It is thought which makes man's greatness.

€ We know truth not only by reason, but also through the heart; it is through the heart that we know first principles, and it is in vain that reasoning, which has no hold there, essays to combat them. This is the sole aim of the Pyrrhonians, who labour for it unsuccessfully. We know that we do not dream: however powerless we be to



prove it by reason, this powerlessness implies nothing but the feebleness of our reason, and not the uncertainty of all our knowledge, as they maintain. For the knowledge of first principles—as that there are space, time, motion, numbers—is as firm as that of any principles given us by reasoning. And it is upon this knowledge of the heart and instinct that reason has to lean, and found all her discourse. (The heart feels that there are three dimensions in space, and that numbers are infinite, and reason then demonstrates that there are not two square numbers of which one may be double the other. Principles are felt, propositions are deduced, and both with certitude, although in different ways.)

Thus it is as useless and as ridiculous for reason to demand of the heart proofs of its first principles, before agreeing to consent thereto, as it would be for the heart to demand from reason a sentiment of all the propositions which reason demonstrates, before agreeing to receive them.

This impotence therefore ought to serve only to humiliate reason, which wishes to pass judgment on everything, but not to oppose our certitude, as if there were nothing but reason capable of instructing us. Rather, would to God that we never had need of it, and that we knew everything by instinct and intuition! But nature has refused us this boon, for, on the contrary, she has given us very few cognitions of this sort; all others can be acquired only through reasoning.

And this is why those to whom God has given religion through the intuition of the heart are indeed happy, and legitimately persuaded. But to those who have it not, we can give it only by reasoning, while waiting for God to give it them through the intuition of the heart, without which faith is but human and useless for salvation.

☪ *Philosophers:* They believe that God alone is worthy of love and admiration, and they have desired to be loved and admired by men, and know not their corruption. If they feel themselves filled with sentiments of love and adoration for Him, and if they find in Him



their chief joy, let them esteem themselves good,—so much the better.

But if they are antagonistic to Him, if they have no inclination but to establish themselves in man's esteem, and if, for all perfection, they only work so that, without forcing men, they make them find their happiness in loving them, I say that this perfection is horrible. What! have they known God and not desired only and solely that men might love Him, but that men should go no further than themselves, and have they wished to be the object of the voluntary happiness of men?

¶ Miracles were wrought by Jesus Christ, and then by the apostles and the first saints, in great number, because the prophecies being yet unaccomplished, and accomplishing themselves in them, the miracles alone bore witness. It was foretold that the Messiah should convert the nations. How was this prophecy accomplished without the conversion of the nations? And how were the nations converted to the Messiah, since they did not see this last effect of the prophecies which proved Him? Accordingly, before He had died, risen, and converted the nations all was not accomplished, and thus there was a necessity for miracles during that time. Now there is no more need for miracles against the Jews, for the fulfilled prophecies are an enduring miracle.

¶ . . . For we must not mistake ourselves; we consist as much of automaton as of mind, and thence it is that the instrument which works persuasion is not demonstration only. How few demonstrated things there are! Proofs convince the mind alone. Our strongest and most accepted proofs are made by custom. Custom inclines the automaton which draws the mind without the mind's being aware of it. Who has demonstrated that to-morrow will dawn, and that we shall die? And what is there which is more believed? It is custom, then, which persuades us of these things, and which makes so many Christians, so many Turks, pagans, trades, soldiers, etc. In short, we must have recourse to it when once our



mind has seen where truth is, in order to prepare us for and tinge us with this belief, which escapes us every hour, for to have its proofs always present is too great an undertaking. We have to acquire an easier credence,—that of habit,—which without violence, art, or argument, makes us believe things and inclines all our powers to this belief, so that our mind falls into it naturally. When one believes only by force of conviction, and the automaton is inclined to believe the contrary, this is not enough. Therefore both parts must be made to believe: the mind, by the reasons which it is sufficient for it to have seen once in its life, and the automaton, by custom, and by not allowing it to incline to the contrary. “*Inclinacor meum, Deus.*”

Reason acts slowly, with so many surveys of so many principles which must be always present, that at any hour it grows dull and goes astray, for want of having all its principles present. Intuition does not act so: it works at once, and is always ready. Therefore our faith must be intuition; otherwise it will be always vacillating.

☞ Fathers fear that the natural love of their children will be effaced. What, then, is this nature which is liable to effacement? Habit is a second nature, which destroys the first. But what is nature? Why is not the habit natural? I am very much afraid that this nature itself is but a first habit, as habit is a second nature.

☞ *Against Pyrrhonism:* We suppose that all men apprehend things in the same manner, but our supposition is quite gratuitous, for we have no proof of it. I see clearly that these words are used on the same occasions, and that every time two men see a body change its place, they each express the sight of this one thing by the same word, each saying that it has moved, and from this agreement of application we strongly conjecture an agreement of ideas; but it is not absolutely and finally convincing, although there may be much in favour of the affirmative, since we know that the same deductions are often drawn from different suppositions. That is suf-



ficient at least to obscure the matter; not that it totally extinguishes the natural light which assures us of these things, — the academicians would have wagered, — but it dulls it, and disturbs the dogmatists — to the glory of the Pyrrhonian cabal, which consists of this ambiguous ambiguity and a certain doubtful obscurity which our doubts cannot deprive of all clearness, and whose darkness our natural lights cannot quite dispel.

¶ We must love only God, and hate only ourselves.

If the foot had always ignored the fact that it belonged to the body, and that there was a body on which it depended; if it knew and loved itself alone; and if it became aware that it belongs to a body on which it depends, what regret, what shame for its past life would it feel, to have been useless to the body which promoted its life, and which would have annihilated it had it rejected it and separated it from itself, as it separated itself from the body! How it would pray to be kept! And with what submission would it resign itself to be governed by the will which rules the body, even to consenting to be cut off, if need be, or to lose its membership; for every member must be glad and willing to perish for the body, for which alone all exists.

¶ That the members may be happy, they must have but one will, and make it conform to the body.

¶ When one is accustomed to using bad reasons with which to prove the effects of nature, one no longer wishes to receive the good when they are discovered. The example given of them was the circulation of the blood, to show why the vein swells below the ligature.

¶ As a rule, we persuade ourselves more by the reasons we have found for ourselves than by those which have occurred to other people.

¶ The arithmetical machine produces effects which approach nearer to thought than all that animals do; but it does nothing which can cause it to be said that, like animals, it has will.



¶ Although the persons have no interest at all in what they say, it must not therefore be concluded that they do not lie; for there are people who lie for the sake of lying.

¶ There is pleasure in being in a storm-tossed boat when we are certain that it will not perish. The persecutions which agitate the Church are of this nature.

¶ Human nature is considered in two ways, the one, according to its end, — and then it is great and incomparable, — the other, according to the multitude (as the nature of the horse or the dog is judged by the [habit] of watching its course, and “*animum arcendi*”), — and then man is abject and vile. And those are the two ways which make him diversely judged, and which cause philosophers to dispute so much. For the one negatives the supposition of the other; the one says, “He is not born for this end, for all his actions are repugnant to it”; the other says, “He departs from his end when he performs base actions.”

¶ With how little pride does a Christian believe himself united with God! With how little dejection does he liken himself to the worms of the earth!

What a seemly way of receiving life and death, good things and evil!

¶ [We should have pity for both, but for the first we should have the pity which springs from tenderness, and for the others the pity which springs from contempt.]

¶ [Is it courage in a dying man to go in weakness and agony to confront an all-powerful and eternal God?]

¶ Our imagination so greatly magnifies the present time, by force of continually reflecting on it, and so dwarfs eternity for lack of reflecting on it, that we make the cipher eternity and eternity a cipher; and this is so strongly rooted in us that all our reason cannot protect us against it, and that . . .



¶ That foolish project of Montaigne's – to describe himself! And not in passing and against his principles (for it falls to every one's lot to fail), but according to his own maxims and by a primary and chief design. For to say foolish things at random and through weakness is a common defect, but to say them designedly is intolerable.

¶ I marvel at the boldness with which these persons undertake to speak of God, when addressing themselves to the impious. Their first chapter is to prove the divinity by the works of nature. I should not wonder at their enterprise if they addressed their discourse to the faithful, for it is certain that those who have faith quick within the heart see at once that all which is, is nothing but the work of the God whom they worship. But for those in whom this light is extinguished and in whom they design to rekindle it, persons destitute of faith and grace, who, seeking with all their power everything they see in nature which can lead them to this knowledge, find only obscurity and gloom, – to tell those that they have only to look at the least of the objects about them in order to see God revealed therein, and to offer them, as the whole proof of this great and important subject, the course of the moon and the planets, and to pretend to have completed the proof by such a discourse, is to give them cause to believe that the proofs of our religion are very weak; and reason and experience show me that nothing is more fitted to make them distrust it.

Not in this way does Scripture, which best knows the things that are of God, speak of Him. On the contrary, it says that God is a hidden God, and that since the corruption of nature, He has left them in a blindness from which they can be freed only through Jesus Christ, except for whom all communication with God is cut off: "*Nemo novit Patrem, nisi Filius, et cui voluerit Filius revelare.*"

It is this that Scripture shows us when it says in so many places that those who seek God find Him. It is not this light which is spoken of "as daylight at noon"; it is not said that those who seek daylight at noon, or water



in the sea, shall find it; and so the evidence of God in nature must not be of this kind. Thus it tells us elsewhere: "*Vere tu es Deus absconditus.*"

¶ To mask nature, and to disguise it: no more king, pope, bishop, but "august monarch," etc.; no Paris, but "capital of the kingdom." There are some occasions when Paris must be called Paris, and others when it must be called "capital of the kingdom."

¶ In proportion as we have understanding we find that there are more original persons. Common-place folk find no difference in people.

¶ If everything is submitted to reason, our religion will have nothing mysterious or supernatural. If the principles of reason are violated, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.

¶ *On the Christian religion not being unique:* So far from this being a reason for believing that it is not the true religion, it is, on the contrary, that which shows that it is the true religion.

¶ If the primitive Church was in error, the Church is overthrown. When the Church is in error to-day, it is not the same thing, for it always has the superior maxim of tradition from the hand of the primitive Church; and so this submission and conformity to the primitive Church prevails and corrects everything. But the primitive Church did not suppose and consider the future one as we suppose and consider the primitive one.

¶ Men are charged from their childhood with the care of their honour, their property, their friends, and with their friends' property and honour besides. They are burdened with business, with learning languages, with drill, and they are given to understand that they will not know happiness unless their health, their honour, their fortune, and that of their friends, be in good case, and that one thing wanting will make them unhappy. Thus they are given charges and employments which keep



them busy from daybreak. "There is a strange way of making them happy!" you will say, "What more could be done to make them unhappy?" How! what could be done? It is needful only to deprive them of these cares, for then they will see themselves, and think of what they are, whence they come and whither they go; and so they cannot be too much occupied and distracted. This is why, if, after so many occupations have been prepared for them, they have some time of relaxation, they are advised to employ it in diversion and amusement, and in keeping themselves always fully employed.

¶ The people have very sane opinions; for instance:

1. In choosing amusement and the chase rather than poetry. The semi-learned laugh at them, and triumph in showing the folly of the world in this matter, but, by a reason which they cannot discern, the world is right.

2. In distinguishing men by externals, such as nobility or property. People triumph again in showing how unreasonable this is, but it is very reasonable. (Cannibals deride an infant king.)

3. In taking offence at a box on the ear, or in so greatly desiring glory. But glory is very desirable, because of other essential benefits which accompany it; and a man who has received a box on the ear without resenting it is overwhelmed with injuries and importunities.

4. In work for the uncertain; travelling by sea; passing across a plank.

¶ The Jews, in killing Him so that they might not accept Him as the Messiah, have given Him the last mark of the Messiah; and in continuing to disown Him, they made themselves irreproachable witnesses; and in slaying Him and continuing to deny Him, they have accomplished the prophecies.

¶ I can well imagine a man without hands, feet, or head, for it is experience alone which teaches us that the head is more necessary than the feet. But I cannot conceive a man without thought; he would be either a stone or a brute.



¶ How telescopes have revealed to us stars which did not exist for the philosophers of the past! They boldly violated Holy Scripture by saying, “There are only a thousand and twenty-two; we know it.”

“There are herbs on the earth; we see them — (from the moon they are not seen); — and on these herbs hairs, and in these hairs minute animals; but after that, nothing more.” O presumptuous ones!

“Compounds are made up of elements; and the elements — no.” O presumptuous ones! Here is a nice point; we may not say that there is what we cannot see; we must speak as others do, but not think like them.

¶ Words variously arranged make a different meaning, and meanings variously arranged have different effects.

¶ A meaning changes according to the words which express it. Meanings receive dignity from words, instead of giving words dignity.

¶ *Against those who, trusting in God's mercy, remain in apathy, without doing good works:*

Since our sins spring from two sources, pride and sloth, God has revealed to us for their cure two qualities in Himself — His mercy and His justice.

It is for justice to humble pride, however holy the works may be, “*et non intres in iudicium,*” etc., and it is for mercy to attack sloth by exhorting to good works, according to the passage, “The goodness of God leadeth to repentance,” and this, of the Ninevites — “Repent, and see if peradventure He will have compassion on us.” And thus, so far from authorising indolence, mercy, on the contrary, is the quality which expressly opposes it; so that instead of saying, “If God had no mercy, we should have to make all sorts of efforts towards virtue,” we must say that it is because God has mercy that all sorts of efforts must be made.

¶ The example of Alexander's chastity has not made as many people chaste as that of his drunkenness has made intemperate. It is not shameful to be less virtuous than



he, and it seems excusable to be no more vicious than he. One does not believe oneself to have quite the vices of the common ruck, when in the vices of these great men; and yet no one minds having those of the common ruck. We hold to them by the end by which they hold the people, for however high they be, some tie unites them to the least of men. They are not suspended in the air, isolated from our society. No, no; if they are greater than we, it is because their heads are higher, but their feet are as low as ours. They are all at the same level and supported by the same ground; and at this extremity they are as abased as we, as the smallest, as children, as animals.

¶ What a perversion of judgment it is which makes every one set himself before every one else, and love his own good and the continuance of his own happiness and life better than that of all the rest of the world!

¶ Those who are accustomed to judge by intuition understand nothing of matters of reason, for they desire to penetrate a thing at first sight, and are not used to seeking out principles. And others, on the contrary, who are accustomed to reason from principles, and understand nothing of matters of intuition, seek principles therein, and are unable to discern at a glance.

¶ Contradiction is a bad mark of truth: many certain things are contradicted; many false things pass uncontradicted. Contradiction is not a mark of falsehood, nor the lack of contradiction a mark of truth.

¶ *Thought:* All human dignity lies in thought. From its nature, therefore, thought is a wonderful and incomparable thing. Strange must be its defects to render it contemptible, yet there is nothing more ridiculous than some of its shortcomings. How great it is by its nature! How mean by its faults!

But what is this thought? How foolish it is!

¶ Gradation: the people honour persons of high birth; the self-educated despise them, saying that birth is not



a personal advantage, but a matter of chance; the educated honour them, not as do the people, but from a deeper idea; the zealots who have more zeal than knowledge, despise them, in spite of the reason for which the educated honour them, because they judge them by a new light derived from their piety; but perfect Christians honour them for a higher reason. Thus opinions swing from *for* to *against*, according to a man's degree of enlightenment.

¶ It is true, therefore, to say that every one is under a delusion; for although the opinions of the people are sound, they are not sound in the way the people think them to be, for they think that truth is where it is not. Truth is indeed in their opinions, but not at the point they imagine. [Thus] it is true that noblemen should be honoured, but not because birth is an advantage in itself.

¶ Continual shifting from *for* to *against*. We have shown that man is vain, by reason of his regard for things which are not essential; and all these opinions are destroyed. We then showed that these opinions are all very sound, and that these vanities being all well founded, the people are not so vain as they are said to be; and thus we have destroyed the opinion which destroyed that of the people. But now we must destroy this last proposition, and show that it is always true that the people are vain, although their opinions be sound; because they do not discern where the truth of their opinions lies; and as they set it where it is not, their opinions often have much that is false, and little that is sound.

¶ Concupiscence and strength are the sources of all our actions. Concupiscence works the voluntary, strength the involuntary.

¶ It is not unprofitable to be smart, for it shows that a large number of people work for one; it is to show by one's locks that one has a valet, a perfumer, etc.; by one's bands, threads, embroidery . . . , etc. And it is not merely vaneer, or outside show, to have many arms [at one's



service], for the more a man has, the stronger he is. To be fine is to show power.

¶ How is it that a crippled person does not irritate us, and that a crippled mind does? Because a crippled person recognises that we walk straight, and a crippled mind says that it is we who limp; except for that we should have pity rather than anger. Epictetus inquires more forcibly, "Why are we not vexed if any one says that we have a headache, and vexed if we are told that we reason badly, or lack discrimination?" It is because we are quite certain that we have not a headache (and that we do not limp); but we are not equally assured that we discern the truth. So that having no assurance of it, when the contrary appears perfectly plain to some one else, except that it appears perfectly plain to us, it makes us doubtful and surprised, and still more so when our choice is derided by very many others; for we needs must prefer our own lights to those of other people, and to do this is bold and difficult. There is never this contradiction in the senses with regard to a cripple.

Man is so constituted, that because he is told he is a fool, he believes it; and by dint of telling himself that he is a fool, he makes himself believe it. For man inwardly holds with himself a conversation which it is important to direct aright: "*Corrumpunt mores bonos colloquia prava.*" Silence should be kept as long as may be, and God alone conversed of, whom we know to be the Truth, and thus we draw truth to ourselves.

¶ It is dangerous to show man too often that he is equal to beasts, without showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to show him too frequently his greatness without his baseness. It is yet more dangerous to leave him ignorant of both. But it is very desirable to show him the two together.

¶ Men's sole occupation is the acquisition of property, and they cannot show that they possess it justly (for they hold it only by men's caprice), nor have they strength to hold it surely. It is the same with knowledge



—for sickness takes it from us. We are incapable of the good and the true.

¶ It is wrong that any should attach himself to me, although he do it gladly and voluntarily. I should deceive those in whom I aroused this desire, for I am not an end for any person, and I have not wherewith to satisfy any. Am I not ready to die? And thus the object of their attachment will die. Therefore, just as I should be guilty in making a falsehood to be believed, although I inculcate it gently and it be believed gladly, and people please me by believing it, so I am guilty in making myself loved, and if I draw people to attach themselves to me. I ought to warn those who are ready to consent to the lie that they ought not to believe it, whatever advantage accrue to me thereby; and, in the same way, that they ought not to attach themselves to me, for they must devote their lives and their attention to pleasing God or in seeking Him.

¶ There are few true Christians, I say even for the faith: there are indeed some who believe, but by superstition; there are indeed some who believe not, but by libertinism: few are between the two. (I do not include herein those who have true piety of morals, and all those who believe by intuition of the heart.)

¶ Will an heir who finds the title-deeds of his house say, "Perhaps they are false?" and neglect to examine them?

¶ Submission and use of reason, in which true Christianity consists.

¶ The last attainment of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but weak, if it reach not that knowledge. If natural things are beyond it, what shall be said of the supernatural?

¶ We are pleased only with the combat, not with the victory: we like to watch animals fighting, not the victor falling upon the vanquished; what did we wish to see, if not the end of the victory? and as soon as it comes, we



are satiated. So it is at a game; so it is in the search for truth: we like to see the strife of warring opinions, but to contemplate the revealed truth,—by no means. In order to be observed with pleasure it must be seen springing from dispute. It is the same with the passions; there is pleasure in seeing two opposing passions clash, but when one has prevailed it is no longer anything but brutality. We never seek things, but the pursuit of things; thus, in plays, scenes of contentment, without fear, are not worth anything, neither are extreme miseries without hope, nor brutal amours, nor bitter severities.

€ Abraham asked nothing for himself, but only for his servants; thus the just man takes nothing of the world, or the world's applause, for himself, but only for his passions, over which he is master, saying to one, Go, and to the other, Come. "*Sub te erit appetitus tuus.*" His passions thus dominated are virtues. Avarice, jealousy, anger, even God attributes them to Himself, and they are as much virtues as clemency, pity, constancy, which also are passions. They must be treated as slaves, and while leaving them their food, the soul must be prevented from partaking of it; for when passions get the mastery they are vices, and then they give to the soul of their food, and she eats thereof and is poisoned.

€ We are full of things which throw us outside ourselves. We feel by instinct that we must not seek our happiness within us. Our passions set us beside ourselves, even when there is nothing to excite them. Exterior objects tempt us of themselves and call to us even when we do not think it. And thus philosophers have vainly said, "Retire into yourselves, you will there find your good"; people do not believe them; and those who do believe them are the emptiest and most foolish.

€ Continuous eloquence wearies.

Princes and kings play occasionally. They are not always on their thrones; they tire of them: grandeur must be quitted in order to be felt. Continuity in any-



thing is displeasing; cold is agreeable in order that we may warm ourselves.

Nature acts by progress "*itus et reditus*." She goes and comes, then goes farther, then twice a lesser distance, then farther than ever, etc.

€ *That Josephus and Tacitus and the other historians have not spoken at all of Jesus Christ:* So far from that working against [the Christian religion], on the contrary, it works for [it], for it is certain that Jesus Christ existed, and that His religion made a great stir, and that these people were not ignorant of it; and thus it is plain that they concealed this designedly, or that they spoke of Him, and have either suppressed or altered what they wrote.

€ A good likeness cannot be made except by reconciling all contradictions, and it is not enough to follow a sequence of harmonious qualities without reconciling contradictions. To understand the meaning of an author all contradictory passages must be reconciled.

Thus, for the understanding of the Scripture, it must have one meaning in which all contradictory passages agree. It is not enough that it have a meaning with which many harmonious passages accord; it must also have one which makes even opposite passages agree.

Every author has one meaning in which all contradictory passages agree, or he has no meaning at all. This cannot be said of the Scripture and of the prophets; assuredly they had a very certain meaning. It is necessary, then, to seek a meaning which reconciles all contradictions. The true meaning, therefore, is not that of the Jews; but in Jesus Christ all contradictions are reconciled.

The Jews do not know how to reconcile the cessation of the kingdom and principality foretold by Hosea, with the prophecy of Jacob. If we understand the law, the sacrifices, and the kingdom as realities, the passages cannot all be made to agree. Necessarily, therefore, they are only figures. We cannot even harmonise the passages of the same author or of the same book, sometimes not



even of the same chapter, and this shows the author's meaning very plainly, as when Ezekiel (ch. xx.) says that the people shall live in the commandments of God, and that they shall not live in them.

¶ 1. The principal standpoints of the Pyrrhonians (I omit the lesser), are: That we have no certainty of the truth of these principles outside faith and revelation, except that we naturally feel them within us; but this natural intuition is not a convincing proof of their truth, since, having no certainty beyond faith as to whether man is created by a good God, or by a wicked demon, or by chance, it is doubtful whether these principles which nature has given us, are true, or false, or uncertain, according to our origin; and since, also, no one has any assurance, outside faith, as to whether he wakes or sleeps, seeing that while asleep he thinks he is awake, as firmly as we do, he believes he sees space, figures, motions, he feels the lapse of time, he measures it, and, in short, acts as though awake. So that, — part of life confessedly being passed in sleep, where, however it may appear to us, we have no idea of the true, all our feelings then being illusions, — who knows whether this other part of life, wherein we think ourselves awake, is not another sleep a little different from the first, from which we awake when we think we slumber?

There are the principal points on one side and the other.

I leave the lesser, such as the arguments of the Pyrrhonians against the impressions of custom, education, manners, countries, and similar things, which, however they may influence the majority of common men, who dogmatise only on these vain foundations, are upset by the least breath of the Pyrrhonians. We have only to see their books, if we are not sufficiently persuaded of it; we shall become so very quickly, and perhaps too much so.

I pause at the one stronghold of the dogmatists, namely, that when speaking sincerely and in good faith, natural principles cannot be doubted. Against which the



Pyrrhonians set in a word the uncertainty of our origin, which includes that of our nature; and this the dogmatists have still to answer as long as the world lasts.

See the open war between men, where each has to choose his side and of necessity declare himself either for dogmatism or Pyrrhonism, for he who thinks to remain neutral will be a Pyrrhonian *par excellence*. This neutrality is the essence of the cabal: he who is not against them is indeed for them. They are not for themselves: they are neutral, indifferent, suspended over all, themselves not excepted.

II. What, then, will man do in this state? Will he doubt everything? will he doubt whether he is awake? whether he is pinched? whether he is burnt? will he doubt whether he doubts? will he doubt whether he exists? We cannot come to that, and I aver that there has never been any perfectly effectual Pyrrhonian. Nature sustains the impotent reason and keeps it from reaching this pitch of extravagance.

On the other hand, then, will he say that he certainly possesses truth, he who, however little he be urged, can show no title to it and is forced to leave hold?

What chimera, then, is man? What an oddity, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of everything, senseless earthworm; depositary of truth, cloaca of uncertainty and error; the glory and the refuse of the universe.

Who shall unravel this tangle?

Nature confounds the Pyrrhonians, and reason confounds the dogmatists. What, then, will become of you, O men, who seek what is your condition, by your natural reason? You cannot escape either of these sects, or exist in either of them.

Know then, proud creature, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, impotent reason. Be silent, imbecile nature. Know that man infinitely surpasses man, and learn from your master your true state, of which you are ignorant: hear God.

For, in short, if man had never been corrupted, he would enjoy in his innocence truth and felicity with



certainty. And if man were corrupt, and nothing else, he would have no idea either of truth or of blessedness. But, unfortunate as we are, and the more so than if there were no greatness in our condition, we have an idea of happiness, and cannot reach it; we perceive an image of truth, and possess only deceit; and are incapable of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge—so manifest is it that we were once at a degree of perfection from which, unhappily, we have fallen.

Nevertheless, what an astounding thing, that the mystery the most remote from our knowledge—the mystery of the transmission of sin—should be that without which we can have no knowledge of ourselves! For it is beyond doubt that there is nothing which is more shocking to reason than to say that the sin of the first man has made guilty those who, being so far removed from this source, appear incapable of participating in it. This transmission does not merely appear to us impossible, it seems even very unjust, for what is more opposed to the rules of our poor justice than to damn eternally a child incapable of will, for a sin in which he appears to have so little part, that it was committed six thousand years before he came into being? Certainly, nothing offends us more than this doctrine; and yet, without this most incomprehensible of all mysteries, we are incomprehensible to ourselves. The difficulty of our position takes its twists and turns in this abstruse matter; so that man is more inconceivable without this mystery, than this mystery is inconceivable to man.

[Whence it appears that God, wishing to make the difficulty of our existence unintelligible to us, has hidden the knot of it so far above us, or rather, so far beneath us, that we have been quite incapable of reaching it; so that it is not by the proud activity of our reason, but by its simple submission, that we can truly know ourselves.

These foundations, solidly established on the inviolable authority of religion, make us to know that there are two verities of faith equally constant: the one, that man, as created, or in a state of grace, is raised above all nature, and made as like unto God, and participating in



His divinity: the other, that in a state of corruption and sin, he is fallen from this estate and made like the beasts.

These two propositions are equally stable and certain. Scripture declares it plainly, when it says in certain passages, “*Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum*”; “*Effundam spiritum meum super omnem carnem*”; “*Dii estis*,” etc.;—and in others: “*Omnis fero faenum*”; “*Homo assimilatus est jumentis insipientibus et similis factus est illis*”; “*Dixi in corde meo de filiis hominum. . .*”

Whence it appears clearly that man, by grace, is made like unto God, participating in His divinity, and that without grace, he is like to the brute beasts.]

¶ To put hope in formalities is superstition, but not to desire to submit to formalities is arrogance.

¶ To regulate the love one owes to oneself, one must imagine a body full of thinking members (for we are members of the whole), and see how much each member should love itself, etc.

¶ Philosophers have consecrated the vices by attributing them even to God: Christians have consecrated the virtues.

¶ If the feet and the hands had a private will, they would never be in order except in submitting this private will to the premier will which governs the whole body. Without that, they are in disorder and unhappiness, but in desiring only the good of the body, they work their own good.

¶ The metaphysical proofs of God are so removed from human reasoning, and so involved, that they hardly strike us, and when they help some, they help them only so long as they see the demonstration, but an hour afterwards, they fear that they have been deceived. “*Quod curiositate cognoverint, superbia amiserunt.*”

It is this which is produced by the knowledge of God gained without Jesus Christ—the communication without a mediator with the God we have known without



a mediator; while those who have known God through a mediator know their misery.

☞ Reason commands us more imperiously than a master: for in disobeying the one we are unfortunate; in disobeying the other we are fools.

☞ Those who love not the truth take as their pretext the variance of the multitude of those who deny it; and thus their error comes only because they love not truth or charity, and so they have no excuse for it.

☞ There are many people who listen to the sermon in the same way that they listen to vespers.

☞ *Authority:* So far from fact that you have heard a thing said ruling your belief, you ought to believe nothing except as if you had never heard it said. It is the consent of you to yourself, and the steady voice of your reason, and not the reason of others, which ought to make you believe.

So important is belief! A hundred contradictions would be true! Were antiquity the rule of belief, then the ancient were without rule. If general consent, if men had perished?

False humility, pride. Raise the curtain. You have worked in vain; so it is necessary either to believe, or deny, or doubt. Shall we then have no rule? We judge animals by seeing if what they do, they do well; will there not be a rule for judging men? To deny, believe, and doubt properly, are to men what running is to a horse.

Punishment of those who sin: error.

☞ Two things instruct man concerning his whole nature: instinct and experience.

☞ The three lusts have made three sects, and the philosophers have but followed one or the other of these lusts.

☞ Part of the confusion of the damned will be to see themselves condemned by their own reason, by which they claimed to condemn the Christian religion.



¶ *Pyrrhonism*: Everything here is partly true and partly false. Not so with eternal truth: it is entirely pure and true; the mixture dishonours and destroys it. Nothing is purely true, and thus, judged by the pure truth, nothing is true. You will say that it is true that homicide is wrong, — yes, for we indeed know the wrong and the false. But what will they tell us is good? Continence? I say no, for the world would end. Marriage? No, continence is better. Not to kill? No, for the disorders would be terrible, and the wicked would slay all the good. To kill? No, that subverts nature. We have the true and the good only in part, and mixed with the evil and the false.

¶ They have some true principles, but they misuse them, and the abuse of truths ought to be punished just as much as the introduction of lies.

How if there were two hells — the one for sins against charity, the other for sins against justice?

¶ The “opening” power of a key; the “drawing” power of a crook.

¶ Superstition, concupiscence; scruples, and evil desires; shameful fear; fear — not that which comes from believing in God, but that which comes from doubting whether He exists or no. Right fear comes from faith, wrong fear from doubt; the right fear, joined to hope, because it is born of faith and we hope in the God in whom we believe; the wrong, joined to despair, because we fear the God in whom we have no faith; some fear to lose Him, others fear to find Him.

¶ [. . . That is where natural cognitions lead us. If these natural cognitions are not true, there is no truth in man, and if they are true, man, forced to abase himself in one way or another, finds in them a great cause of humiliation; and since he cannot exist without believing them, I would that before entering upon the deeper investigation of nature, he consider it once seriously and leisurely, that he thus regard himself also, and knowing what proportion there is . . .]



Let man, then, contemplate the whole of nature in her lofty and abundant majesty; let him avert his gaze from the low objects which surround him; let him consider this shining luminary, set like an eternal lamp to give light to the universe; let the earth appear to him as a single speck compared with the vast orbit which this star describes, and let him marvel that this vast orbit is itself only a very delicate point compared to that encompassed by the bodies which revolve in the firmament. But if vision stops there, let imagination pass beyond; it will sooner weary of imagining, than nature of supplying. All this visible world is but an imperceptible feature in the ample bosom of nature. No idea can approach it. We have vainly tried to extend our conceptions beyond imaginable space, we produce only atoms, compared with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere. In short, it is the most sensible sign of the omnipotence of God,—let our imagination lose itself in this thought.

Let man, returning to himself, consider what he is compared to all else that exists; let him regard himself as astray in this remote corner of nature; and from the little dungeon wherein he is lodged—I mean the universe—let him learn to appraise the world, kingdoms, cities, and himself, at their proper value. What is a man in the infinite?

But that he may see another prodigy equally amazing, let him examine the most delicate things he knows. Let a ciron show him, in the smallness of its body, parts incomparably smaller, legs with joints, veins in these legs, blood in these veins, humours in this blood, drops in these humours, vapours in these drops,—that, again dividing these last, he may exhaust his power in these conceptions, and if the final object at which he can now arrive be that of our discourse, he will think perhaps, that there he has the extreme smallness of nature. I wish to make him see therein another unfathomable thing. I would describe to him, not only the visible universe, but the immensity that can be conceived of nature, enclosed in



this contracted atom. Let him see there an infinitude of universes, each of which has its firmament, its planets, its earth, in the same proportion as the visible world; in this earth, animals, down to cirons, in which he will find what he found in the first; and finding again the same in the rest, without end or break, let him lose himself in these marvels, as astonishing by their smallness as the others by their magnitude, for who will not wonder that our body, which just now was not perceptible in a universe which is itself imperceptible in the bosom of the all, is now a colossus, a world, or rather a whole, in comparison with the unattainable nothing?

He who thus considers man will be affrighted at himself, and regard himself as if suspended in his natural body between these two abysses of infinitude and nothing; he will tremble to behold these marvels; and I believe that, his curiosity changing to wonder, he will be disposed rather to contemplate them in silence than to presumptuously investigate them.

For after all, what is man in nature? A cipher, compared to infinity; a whole, compared to a cipher; a medium between nothing and all. Infinitely distant from comprehending extremes, equally incapable of seeing the nothing from which he is drawn or the infinite in which he is engulfed, the end of things and their principles are for him invincibly hidden in impenetrable secrecy. What will he do then, except discern some semblance of the centre of things, in an eternal despair of knowing either their principle or their end? All things are come out of nothing, and extend even to the infinite. Who shall follow these wondrous progressions? The author of these marvels understands them,—no other can do so.

Through failing to contemplate these infinities, men have rashly addressed themselves to the investigation of nature, as if they were in some way proportioned to her. It is strange that through a presumption as infinite as their object, they have desired to understand the principles of things, and thence to arrive at a knowledge of everything. For undoubtedly this design cannot be



formed without presumption, or without a capacity as infinite as nature.

When we are taught we understand that nature having graven in everything its own image and the image of its author, these images all partake of her double infinity. It is thus that we see that all the sciences are infinite in the extent of their researches: for who doubts that geometry, for example, has infinite infinities of propositions to unfold? They are also infinite in the multitude and delicacy of their principles; for who does not see that those put forward as the last do not stand by themselves, but rest on others, which, dependent on others again, never allow of any finality? But we make ultimate principles which are apparent to reason, as we do in material things, where we call an indivisible point that beyond which our senses perceive nothing, although by nature infinitely divisible.

Of these two infinities of knowledge, that of magnitude is much more appreciable, and this is why it comes to few people to pretend to know everything.

But the infinitude of smallness is far less patent. The philosophers, indeed, have claimed to arrive at it, and it is there that all have stumbled. It is this which has given rise to these very ordinary titles: OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THINGS, OF THE PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHY, and others, as pretentious in fact, though less so in appearance, as this other dazzling one: DE OMNISCIBILI.

We naturally believe ourselves much more able to reach the centre of things than to embrace their circumference. The visible extent of the world obviously surpasses us, but as it is we who surpass the little things, we think ourselves better able to possess them, and yet it needs no less capacity to reach to the nothing than to the all. Infinite capacity is a necessity for both, and it seems to me that whoever had comprehended the final principles of things would have been able also to attain to a knowledge of the infinite; the one depends from the other, and leads to the other; these extremes meet and unite from the fact of their distance apart, and find themselves again in God, and in God alone.



Let us then know our limits; we are something, and we are not all. Such existence as we have deprives us of the knowledge of the first principles which come out of nothing, and its smallness hides from us the sight of the infinite. Our intelligence has among intellectual things the same rank that our bodies hold in the expanse of nature.

Limited in every way, this state which holds the mean between two extremities obtains in all our powerlessness: our senses perceive nothing extreme; too much noise deafens us; too much light blinds us; too far a distance and too near a proximity hinder our sight; too great length and too much brevity obscure an argument; too much truth bewilders us (I know some who cannot understand that whoever from zero takes four, leaves zero); first principles are too evident for us; too much pleasure disagrees with us; too many concords in music displease us; and too many favours irritate us: we desire the wherewithal to wipe out the debt: "*Beneficia eo usque laeta sunt dum videntur exsolvi posse; ubi multum antevenere, pro gratia odium redditur.*" we feel neither extreme heat nor extreme cold; excessive qualities are hurtful and not perceptible: we no longer feel them, we suffer them; too much youth and too much age, too much and too little instruction, hamper the intellect: in short, extremes are for us as though they did not exist, and we do not exist, in regard to them: they escape us, or we them.

There is our true position. It is that which makes us incapable of knowing certainly, and of ignoring absolutely. We drift about on a vast middle way, always uncertain and wavering, driven from one end towards another. To whatever term we think to attach and fix ourselves, it shifts and quits us, and if we follow it, it escapes our grasp, slips away, and flies in an endless flight. By no means can we arrest it. This is our natural condition, and yet the most contrary to our inclination: we burn with the desire to find a firm foothold and an ultimate base, to raise thereon a tower to reach to the infinite, but all our foundation cracks, and the earth



opens to its very depths. Let us not seek, then, assurance and stability. Our reason is always deceived by the inconstancy of appearances; nothing can fix the finite between the two infinities which enclose it and recede from it.

That being well understood, I think that people will hold themselves in repose, each in the state in which nature has placed him. This middle way which has fallen to our lot being always distant from the extremes, what matters it if a man have a little more understanding of things? If he has it, he takes them from a little higher. Is he not always infinitely remote from the end? and is not the span of our life just as infinitely remote from eternity for enduring ten years more? In view of these infinities, all the finites are equal, and I do not see why the imagination should be set upon one rather than on the other. The mere comparison between ourselves and the infinite vexes us.

If man first studied himself, he would see how incapable he is of passing beyond: how could a part know the whole? But perhaps he will aspire to know at least the parts with which he has some relation? But the parts of the world have such correspondence and inter-connection one with another that I believe it impossible to know one without the other, and without the whole.

Man, for example, has a relation with all that he knows. He needs a place to contain him, time to endure, motion to live, elements to compose him, heat and food to nourish him, air to breathe: he perceives light; he feels bodies; in short, all falls into correspondence with him. To have a knowledge of man, then, it is necessary to know how it is that he needs air for existence; and to have a knowledge of air, to know how it has this relation to the life of man, and so on. Flame does not exist without air: therefore, to know the one, it is needful to know the other.

All things, therefore, being caused and causative, aided and aiding, mediate and immediate, and knit together by a natural and imperceptible bond which connects the most distant and the most contrary, I consider it impos-



sible to know the parts without knowing the whole, as well as to know the whole without knowing each individual part.

And what completes our inability to have a knowledge of things, is that in themselves they are simple, while we are composed of two opposite and different natures, soul and body. For it is impossible that the part within us which reasons be other than spiritual, and were it asserted that we are simply corporeal, that would exclude us yet more from a knowledge of things, there being nothing so inconceivable as that matter may know itself: it is not possible to us to know how it should know itself. And thus, if we are simply material, we can know nothing of the whole, and if we are composed of mind and matter, we can know things perfectly, whether simple, spiritual, or corporeal.

Thence it comes that almost all philosophers confuse the idea of things, and speak of the material spiritually and of the spiritual materially. For they boldly say that bodies “tend downwards,” that they “draw to their centre,” that they “shun their destruction,” that they “fear the void,” that they have “inclinations,” “sympathies,” “antipathies,” all of which are things which belong only to spirits; and in speaking of spirits, they consider them as in a place, and attribute to them motion from one place to another, which things belong only to bodies. Instead of accepting the ideas of these things in themselves we colour them with our own qualities, and impress with our composite nature all the simple things we contemplate.

Who would not think, to see us made up of all things of mind and body, that this compound would be very comprehensible to us? Yet it is what we comprehend the least. To himself, man is the most prodigious thing in nature, for he cannot conceive what is his body, and still less what is his mind, and least of all, how a body can be united with a mind. That is the crowning point of his difficulties, and yet it is his own being: *“Modus quo corporibus adhaerent spiritus comprehendendi ab hominibus non potest, et hoc tamen homo est.”*



Finally, to perfect the proof of our weakness, I will conclude with these two considerations. . . .

¶ *Imagination*: This deceptive part of man, this mistress of error and falsehood, is the more deceitful because it is not deceitful always, for if it were the infallible example of untruth, it would be the infallible example of truth. But, though more frequently false, it exhibits no sign of its quality, and lacks the character of both the true and the false.

I do not speak of fools, I speak of the wisest, and it is among them that imagination has the great gift of persuading men. Reason has cried out in vain—it cannot put a price on things.

This arrogant power, enemy of reason, who delights to control and dominate reason in order to show its strength in all things, has set up a second nature in man. It has its happy, its unhappy; its healthy, its sick; its rich, its poor; it makes a man believe, doubt, and deny reason; it suspends the senses, it makes them active; it has its fools and its wise, and nothing annoys us more than to see that it fills its hosts with another satisfaction, fuller and more complete, than does reason, people of lively imaginations pleasing themselves quite otherwise than the prudent can reasonably do. They look imperiously on those around them; they dispute boldly and confidently, but the others with fear and diffidence; and this gaiety of countenance often gives them the advantage in the opinion of listeners—so much in favour are these wise folk with judges whose natures are akin to their own! Opinion cannot make fools wise, but it makes them happy, in emulation of reason, which can only render its friends miserable—the one covering them with glory, the other with shame.

Who dispenses reputation? Who gives respect and veneration to persons, to works, to laws, to the great, if not this imaginative faculty? How inadequate is all the wealth of the world without its patronage!

Would you not say that this magistrate, whose venerable age imposes respect on all, rules himself by a pure



and sublime reason, and that he judges of things by their nature, without dwelling on those vain circumstances which influence only the imagination of the weak? Watch him enter to hear a sermon, to which he brings a pious zeal, supporting the solidity of his reason by the ardour of his charity. See him ready to listen with exemplary respect. Let the preacher have just appeared, let nature have given him a hoarse voice and an odd cast of countenance, let him have been shaved badly, and if by chance his barber have bedaubed him in addition,—whatever great truths he may declare, I wager the loss of our senator's gravity. The greatest philosopher in the world, on a plank larger than is necessary [to give him foothold], if there is a precipice below, however his reason may convince him of his safety, will be mastered by his imagination. Many could not support the thought of it without paling and sweating.

I will not recount all its effects.

Who does not know that the sight of cats, or of rats, or the cracking of a cinder, may unhinge the reason? The tone of voice misleads even the wisest, and forcibly changes an argument and a poem. Affection or hate puts a different face on justice; and how much more righteous will an advocate find the cause he pleads when he is well paid in advance! How much better an appearance will his bold gestures give him in the eyes of the judges gulled by this outside show! A pretty reason—that a breath can blow about, and in any direction!

I would refer to almost all the actions of men, who seldom give way except under its blows. For reason has been forced to yield, and the wisest adopts as his principles those which have been boldly introduced everywhere by human imagination.

Our magistrates have known this mystery well: their red robes, their ermine, in which they swathe themselves like furry cats, the palaces where they give judgment, the fleurs-de-lis—all this pompous circumstance is very necessary; and if physicians had not gowns and slippers, and if doctors had not square caps and flowing robes, they would never have duped the world, which cannot



resist such an authentic mark. If they were truly just, if physicians had the true art of healing, they would not have needed square caps; the majesty of the sciences would have been sufficiently venerable in itself; but having only imaginary knowledge they have to take these vain instruments which strike the imagination, with which it is that they are concerned, and thus they attract respect.

Soldiers alone are not thus disguised, because in fact their part is more essential; they establish themselves by force, the others by humbug.

Thus it is that our kings have not sought after these disguises, and do not masquerade in extraordinary garments in order to appear kings; but they are accompanied by guards and halberdiers. These armed phizes, whose hands and strength are for them only, the trumpeters and drummers who march before them, and these legions which surround them, make the stoutest tremble. They have not the garments alone, they have force. It would need a very refined reason to regard the great prince in his magnificent seraglio, surrounded by forty thousand janizaries, in the same way as any other man. We cannot even merely see a lawyer in cap and robe without having a favourable opinion of his ability.

Opinion disposes everything; it makes beauty, justice, and good fortune, which make up the world. I should much like to see that Italian book, whose title only is known to me, but which is itself well worth many books: DELLA OPINIONE REGINA DEL MONDO. I subscribe to it without knowing it—except to the bad, if it contain any.

Such, very nearly, are the effects of this deceptive faculty, which seems given to us expressly to lead us into necessary error. We have many other causes of it.

Old impressions are not alone in being able to deceive us: the charms of novelty have the same power. From thence arise all the disputes of men, who reproach one another either with following the false impressions of childhood, or of rashly running after new. Who holds the proper mean? Let him stand forth and prove it. There



is no principle, however natural it may be, which, even if held from childhood, cannot be made to pass as a false impression, either by instruction, or by the senses. "Because," it is said, "you have believed from your infancy that a box is empty when you see nothing in it, you have believed the vacuum possible; this is an illusion of the senses, strengthened by habit, which must be corrected by science." And others say, "Because you have been told in the schools that there is no vacuum, your common sense, which understood it so exactly before, is now corrupted by this false impression, which must be corrected by reverting to your first nature." Which, therefore, has deceived? The senses, or instruction?

We have another cause of error—sickness. It impairs the sense and the judgment. And if great maladies perceptibly affect them, I do not doubt that the lesser also make a proportionate impression.

Yet our own interest is a marvellous thing for agreeably blinding our eyes. The most equitable man in the world is not permitted to be judge in his own cause: I know some who, in order not to be entrapped by this self-interest, have been as unjust as possible as a counter-bias; the sure way to lose a perfectly just cause was to get it commended to them by their near kinsfolk. Justice and truth are two such fine points that our instruments are too blunt to touch them exactly. If they do come upon them, they hide them, and supported by what is around rest more surely on the false than on the true.

Man is but a creature full of natural errors ineffaceable without grace. Nothing shows him the truth, everything deceives him. These two means to truth, reason and the senses, besides that they each lack sincerity, mutually mislead one another.

The senses deceive reason by false representations; and the same tricks they play her, she in turn plays them, and revenges herself. The passions of the soul disturb the senses, and give them wrong impressions. They vie with each other in mutual deception and lying.

€ . . . Without this divine knowledge, which has been



able to lead men either to elevate themselves by the inward sentiment which remains to them of their former greatness, or to abase themselves at the sight of their present weakness.

For seeing truth but partially, they have not been able to attain to a perfect virtue. As some regard nature as incorruptible, and others regard it as irremediable, they have been unable to avoid either pride or sloth, which are the two sources of all vice, since through cowardice they cannot abandon themselves thereto, and through pride they cannot depart from them; for if they knew man's excellence, they ignored his corruption, so that while avoiding sloth, they lost themselves in arrogance; and if they recognised the infirmity of nature, they ignored its dignity, so that they truly avoid vanity, but only by falling into despair. Hence arise the various sects, stoics and epicureans, dogmatists and academicians, etc.

The one Christian religion has been able to cure these two vices, not by driving out the one by means of the other, according to worldly wisdom, but by driving out both by the simplicity of the Gospel. For she teaches the just—whom she raises to participation even in divinity—that in this sublime state they yet carry the source of all corruption, which all through life makes them liable to error, misery, death, sin; and to the impious she proclaims that they are able to attain to the grace of their Redeemer. Thus, making those whom she justifies to tremble, and consoling those she condemns, she so justly tempers fear with hope (through this double capacity for grace and for sin which is common to all) that she abases us infinitely more than reason can do, but without despair, and raises us infinitely higher than does natural pride, but without puffing up: showing truly thereby that she alone being exempt from error and sin, she alone can instruct and correct men.

Who then can refuse to believe and adore these celestial lights? For is it not clearer than the day that we feel within ourselves ineffaceable signs of excellence? And is it not also true that every hour we experience the effects of our deplorable condition? What then do this



chaos and monstrous confusion make known to us, with a voice so powerful that it is impossible to resist it, if not the truth of these two conditions?

€ *Second part: That man without faith cannot know either the true good, or justice:* Every man seeks to be happy: to this there is no exception: whatever different methods they employ, all make for this end. It is this same desire in all, though accompanied by different views, which make some go to war and others not to go. The will never makes the least advance except towards this object: it is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who go and hang themselves.

And yet, for so large a number of years, no one, without faith, has ever arrived at this point for which all are continually making. All complain: princes, subjects; nobles, plebeians; old, young; strong, weak; learned, ignorant; healthy, sick; of all countries, of all times, of all ages, and of all conditions.

So long, so continuous, and so uniform a trial ought to convince us of our powerlessness to attain to the good by our own efforts, but the example teaches us little. It is never so perfectly like that there is not some slight difference, and so we expect that our expectation will not be deceived on this occasion, as it was on the other. And thus the present never satisfies us: experience tricks us, and leads us from misfortune to misfortune, even to death, which is their eternal consummation.

What, then, do this avidity and impotence make known to us, if not that there was once in man a true happiness, of which there now remains to him only the mark and the empty mould, which he tries in vain to fill from all that which surrounds him, seeking in absent things the succour which he does not find in present things, which are all incapable of it, because the infinite gulf can be filled only by a being infinite and immutable, that is to say, by God Himself?

God alone is man's true good; and it is a strange thing that since he has left Him there is nothing in nature which has not been capable of taking His place: stars,



heaven, earth, elements, plants, cabbages, leeks, animals, insects, calves, serpents, fever, pestilence, war, famine, vices, adultery, incest. And since he has lost the true good, all things equally can appear to him to be such, even to his own destruction, although so contrary alike to God, to reason, and to nature.

Some seek it in authority; others in research and knowledge; others in voluptuousness. Others who have indeed come nearer to it have considered that the universal good which all men desire is not in any of the individual things which can be possessed only by a single person, and which, being divided, afflict their possessor more by lack of the part which he has not, than they content him by the enjoyment of that which he has. They have understood that the true good ought to be such that all may possess it at the same time without diminution and without envy, and that no person can lose it against his will. And their reason is that this desire being natural to man, since it is of necessity in all, and which none is able to be without, they conclude therefrom . . .

¶ Time heals griefs and quarrels, because we change; we are no longer the same persons. Neither offender nor offended are any more themselves. It is like a nation whom we have angered, and whom we see again after two generations: they are still the French, but not the same.

¶ If we dreamed the same things every night, it would affect us as much as the objects we see every day; and if an artisan were sure of dreaming every night for twelve hours that he was a king, I believe that he would be almost as happy as a king who dreamed every night for twelve hours that he was an artisan.

If we were to dream every night that we were pursued by enemies and troubled by tormenting phantoms, and if we passed every day in various occupations, as when travelling, we should suffer almost as much as if it were true, and should dread sleep, just as we dread waking when we fear to enter really upon such misfortunes. And indeed it would work nearly as much



harm as reality. But because dreams are all different, and even one varies, what is seen in them affects us less than what is seen when waking, because of the continuity,—which, though not so constant and uniform that it does not change too, changes less abruptly, if frequently, as when we travel; and then we say, “It seems like a dream”; for life is but a dream a little less variable.

¶ By knowing the dominant passion of each one, we are sure of pleasing him, and yet each has fancies, opposed to his proper good, in the very conception which he has of the true good; and this is a singularity which upsets calculations.

¶ We are not contented with the life which we have within us and in our own being: we desire to live an imaginary life in the opinion of others, and we therefore exert ourselves to make an appearance for that end. We toil incessantly to adorn and sustain this imaginary being, and neglect the real one. And if we have calmness, or generosity, or fidelity, we are eager to make it known, in order to attach these virtues to this creature of the imagination; we would rather detach them from ourselves in order to join them to him, and willingly would we be poltroons, to acquire a reputation for valour. What a great mark of the nothingness of our own being, not to be satisfied with the one without the other, and too often renounce the one for the sake of the other! For he who would not die to defend his honour, would be infamous.

¶ Misery provokes despair; pride provokes presumption; the Incarnation shows man the greatness of his misery by the greatness of the remedy it needs.

¶ What a great advantage is nobility! It puts one man, at the age of eighteen years, in the way of fame and honour which another might be able to deserve at fifty. This is thirty years gained without trouble.

¶ When we wish to rebuke to some purpose, and to show another that he is deceived, we must notice from what



side he looks at the matter, for as a rule it is true from that side, and while acknowledging this truth to him, show him the side from which it is false. That contents him, for he sees that he was not deceived and that he merely omitted to look at every side. And people are not vexed at not seeing all, but they do not wish to be deceived; and perhaps that is because man is naturally unable to see all round, and naturally unable to deceive himself with regard to the side which he faces, as, that the apprehensions of the senses are always true.

☉ Each is a whole to himself, for, when he is dead, the whole is dead for him. And so each believes himself to be all in all. We must judge of nature according to nature, not according to ourselves.

☉ There is no doctrine more appropriate to man than that which instructs him of his double capacity to receive and to lose grace, because of the double peril to which he is always exposed,—despair or pride.

☉ Respect is “Incommode yourself.” That is seemingly foolish, but very true, for it is as much as to say, “I will incommode myself willingly if you have need of it, since I do so willingly even when it is of no service to you.” Besides which, respect is for distinguishing the great; if it were respect to be in an arm-chair, one would respect everybody, and distinguish no one; but, being incommoded, we distinguish very well.

☉ Faith indeed says that which the senses do not say, but not the contrary of that which they see: faith is above the senses, not counter to them.

☉ The method of God, who disposes all things with kindness, is to put religion into the mind by reasons and into the heart by grace. But to desire to put it into the mind and into the heart by force and by threats, is to introduce there not religion, but terror, “*terrorem potius quam religionem.*”

☉ The law obliges to that which it does not give; grace gives that to which it obliges.



¶ *Atheists*: What right have they to say that one cannot rise from the dead? Which is the more difficult, to be born, or to rise again; that that which has never been, be, or that that which has been, be again? Is it more difficult to come into being than to return to being? Custom makes the one seem easy, the absence of custom makes the other seem impossible: a popular method of judging!

¶ We are so presumptuous that we would wish to be known to all the world, and even to people who shall come when we are no more; and so vain, that the esteem of five or six persons about us amuses and contents us.

¶ When a natural discourse describes a passion or an impression, we discover within ourselves the truth of what we hear, which was in us without our being aware of it, so that we are disposed to like him who makes us feel it; for he has not made known to us his good qualities, but our own, and so this benefit makes us amiable towards him, and this mutual understanding which we have with him necessarily disposes us in his favour.

¶ When we see the same effect always recur, we argue from it a natural necessity, as that there will be a day to-morrow, etc.; but often nature contradicts us, and does not subject herself to her own rules.

¶ The mind naturally believes, and the will naturally loves; so that for lack of true things, they attach themselves to false.

¶ Do you wish good to be believed of you?—Do not speak it of yourself.

¶ I do not at all admire the excess of a virtue (as valour), if I do not see at the same time the excess of the opposite virtue (as in Epaminondas, who had extreme valour and extreme benignity); for otherwise this is not to rise, but to fall. Greatness is not shown by reaching one extreme, but in being able to touch both extremes at once, and filling all between them. “But it may be that this is only a sudden movement of the mind from one of these



extremes to the other, and that it is in reality only one point, as [when one twirls] a firebrand?" Be it so; but that at any rate marks the agility of the mind, if not its extent.

☉ A rule founded on opinion and imagination prevails for a time, and is mild and voluntary; but the rule of strength prevails always. Thus opinion is as the queen of the world, but force is its tyrant.

☉ He no longer loves this person whom he loved ten years ago. I can well believe it; she is no longer the same, nor is he; he was young, and she also; she is now quite different. He would perhaps love her still, were she such as she was then.

☉ We do not sustain ourselves in virtue by our own strength, but by the counterpoise of two opposite vices, as we remain upright between two contrary winds: take away one of these vices, and we fall into the other.

☉ When we see a natural style, we are quite surprised and charmed, for we expected an author, and we find a man. Whereas those who have good taste, and who in seeing a book think to find a man, are quite surprised to find an author: "*Plus poetice quam humane locutus es.*" Those indeed honour nature, who teach her that she can speak of all things, even theology.

☉ Nature has arranged all her truths each in itself; our method encloses them one within the other, but that is not natural: each has its place.

☉ I have spent much time in the study of abstract sciences, but the little intercourse to be had concerning them has disgusted me with them. When I began the study of man, I saw that these abstract sciences are not proper to him, and that I should be going further out of my sphere in penetrating them than others in ignoring them, and I pardoned others their little knowledge of them. But I at least thought to find some companions in the study of man, because this is the study which is truly proper to him. I was deceived: those who study man are even



fewer than those who study geometry. It is only for lack of knowing how to study him, that people seek other things; but is it not also because this is not the knowledge that man ought to have, and because it is better for him to be ignorant of himself, in order to be happy?

¶ Why do people follow the majority? Because it has more right? No, but because it is stronger. Why do they follow ancient laws and opinions? Because they are the wisest? No, because they stand by themselves, and take from us the cause of diversity.

¶ Those who live irregularly tell those who are regular that it is they who depart from nature, while believing that they themselves follow nature: as those who are in a boat believe that it is those on shore who are moving away. The language is the same in both cases. It is necessary to have a fixed point from which to judge. The port guides those in a boat, but where shall we find a port in morality?

¶ Let it not be asserted that I have said nothing new: the arrangement of the materials is new; when two people play at tennis they both play with the same ball, but one will place it better. I would as soon have it said of me that I make use of old words; and do not the same thoughts form another body of discourse when differently disposed, just as the same words form other thoughts by a different arrangement?

¶ We know ourselves so little that many think that they are about to die when they are quite well; and many that they are quite well when they are near to die. They do not feel the approaching fever, or the abscess about to form.

¶ When they say that heat is only the motion of some globules, and light the "*conatus recedendi*" which we feel, it astonishes us. What! Pleasure only a dance of the senses? We conceived such a different idea of it, and these sensations appear to us so removed from these



others, which we call the same as those which we compare to them! The sensation of the fire, the heat which affects us quite differently from contact, the reception of sound and light, all this appears mysterious to us, and yet it is as palpable as a blow from a stone. It is true that the smallness of the feelings which enter the pores touch other nerves, but these are always touched nerves.

☉ Nature copies herself: a seed thrown on to good ground brings forth fruit; a principle thrown into a receptive mind produces fruit; numbers imitate space, yet are of so different a nature. All is wrought and guided by one master: root, branches, fruits; principles, deductions.

☉ When all moves equally, nothing appears to move, as in a boat. When all tends towards disorder, nothing appears to tend thither. He who stands still makes a point from which to mark the position of others.

☉ The discourses of humility are a matter of pride to the vainglorious, and of humility to the humble. Those of Pyrrhonism are a matter of affirmation to the dogmatists. Few people speak of humility humbly, of chastity chastely, of doubt doubtfully. We are only deceit, duplicity, inconsistency, and we hide and disguise ourselves from ourselves.

☉ To pity the unfortunate is not against concupiscence. On the contrary, we are very glad to render this testimony of good-will, and to attract a reputation for tenderness, without giving anything.

☉ The strength of a man's virtues should not be measured by his efforts, but by his ordinary actions.

☉ Our nature consists of motion: perfect repose is death.

☉ Fine actions concealed are the most estimable. When I find any in history, they greatly please me. But yet they have not been quite concealed, since they have been known, and although concealed as much as possible,



even this much that they have appeared has spoilt all; for their greatest beauty lay in the wish to conceal them.

¶ When we are well, we wonder what we should do if we were ill, and when we are ill, we gladly take medicine; and the misfortune resolves itself into that. We no longer have the passions and desires for amusements and outings which are given by health, and which are incompatible with the necessities of sickness: nature then gives passions and desires suited to our present state. There are only fears (caused by ourselves, and not by nature) to trouble us, because they add to the state in which we are, the passions of the state in which we are not.

¶ As nature makes us unhappy whatsoever our condition, our desires show us a state of happiness, because they attach to the state in which we are, the pleasures of the state in which we are not; and if we had arrived at these pleasures, we should be none the happier for them, because then we should have other desires belonging to our new condition.

¶ Memory and joy are intuitions; and even geometrical propositions become intuitions, for reason makes intuitions natural, and natural intuitions are effaced by reason.

¶ God has not desired to absolve without the Church. Since she has had part in the offence, He wishes her to have part in the pardon. He associates her with Himself in this power, as kings do parliaments; but if she absolves or binds without God, she is no longer the Church; as with a parliament: for, although the king may have given a man pardon, parliament must ratify it; but if the parliament ratify without the king, or if it refuse to ratify by the king's order, it is no longer the king's parliament, but a revolted body.

¶ Great and small have the same accidents, the same vexations, and the same passions, but the first are at the top



of the wheel and the others near the centre, and thus less agitated by the same movements.

¶ When the truth of a thing is not known, it is well that there be a common error to fix men's minds (as, for example, the moon, to which is attributed the change of the seasons, the course of diseases, etc.), for man's chief malady is restless inquisitiveness concerning things he cannot know, and it is not so bad for him to be in error as in this vain curiosity.

¶ There is nothing on earth which does not show either man's misery or God's mercy, or the impotence of man without God, or the power of man with God.

¶ *Title: How it is that people believe so many liars who say that they have seen miracles, and do not believe any who say that they have the secrets of rendering man immortal and of restoring youth?*

Having considered how it is that people put such faith in so many impostors who say that they have remedies, frequently to giving even their lives into their hands, it has seemed to me that the real cause is that some of them are true: for it would not be possible that there should be so many of them false, and that they should be given so much credence, if none of them were true. If there had never been a remedy for an ill, and if all ills had been incurable, it is impossible that men would have imagined that they could offer one; and yet more impossible that so many should give credence to those who boasted of having remedies: so that if a man boasted of being able to prevent death, no one would believe him, because there is no example of that. But as a number of remedies have been proved true by the knowledge even of the greatest men, people's belief has been influenced thereby, and a thing being known to be possible, it has been concluded therefrom that it exists. For the people generally reason thus: "A thing is possible, therefore it is," because, unable to deny the thing in general, since there are particular effects which are true, or to discern which of these effects are true,



they believe in them all. Likewise, that which causes people to believe erroneously in so many effects of the moon is that there are some true ones, such as the tide.

It is the same with prophecies, miracles, divination by dreams, witchcraft, etc. For if none of these had ever been true, none would ever have been believed; and thus, instead of concluding that there are no true miracles because there are so many false, we should say, on the contrary, that there certainly are true miracles, since there are false ones, and that there are none false except for the reason that there are some true.

We must reason in the same way concerning religion, for it would be impossible for men to have imagined so many false religions were there not a true one. The objection thereto is that savages have a religion; but to that, it may be replied that it is because they have heard religion spoken of, as is shown by the deluge, circumcision, St. Andrew's cross, etc.

¶ Other religions, such as those of pagans, are more popular, for they are external, but they are not for intelligent people. A purely intellectual religion would be more suited to the intelligent, but useless to the people. The one Christian religion is suited to all, being both inward and outward. It raises the people, inwardly, and puts down the proud, outwardly; and is not perfect without the two: for it is necessary that the people understand the spirit of the letter, and that the intelligent submit their own spirit to the letter.

¶ To make a man a saint, grace is very necessary, and whoso doubts it knows neither what is a saint nor what is a man.

¶ The true religion teaches us our duties, our failings (pride and lust), and the remedies (humility and mortification).

¶ Man knows not in what rank to put himself. He is visibly astray and fallen from his true position, without power to recover it. He seeks it everywhere anxiously and vainly in impenetrable darkness.



€ There is a great deal of difference between tempting and leading into error. God tempts, but He does not lead into error. To tempt is to afford occasions upon which, as they impose no necessity, a man will do a certain thing if he love not God. To lead into error is to put man under the necessity of believing and following what is false.

€ All men naturally hate one another. They have done what they could to make lust subordinate to the public good. But it is only pretence, and a false image of charity, for at bottom it is only hate.

€ The stoics say, "Enter into yourself; it is there that you will find repose": and that is not true. Others say, "Go further; and seek happiness in amusement": and that is not true: sickness comes. Happiness is neither within us nor without us; it is in God, both within and without us.

€ So inevitably mad are men, that not to be mad would be another turn of madness.

€ We desire truth, and find in ourselves only uncertainty; we seek happiness, and find only misery and death. We are unable not to wish for truth and happiness, and incapable of either certainty or felicity. This desire is left to us as much to punish us as to make us feel from whence we have fallen away.

€ He who would know perfectly the vanity of man has but to consider the causes and effects of love. The cause is an "I know not what" (Corneille): and its effects are fearful.

This "I know not what,"—so slight a thing that we cannot tell how to recognise it, disturbs the whole world—princes, armies, all mankind. If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the entire face of the earth would have been changed.

€ This inward war of reason and the passions has divided those who wish for peace into two sects. The one party has desired to renounce passions and become gods; the



other has desired to renounce reason and become brute beasts. (Des Barreaux.) But they have been unable to do either of these things; reason abides continually, and this impeaches the baseness and injustice of the passions, and disturbs the peace of those who abandon themselves to their passions, while the passions are always quick in those who would renounce them.

¶ *Instinct, reason:* We have a powerlessness to prove, unconquerable by all dogmatism. We have an idea of truth, unconquerable by all Pyrrhonism.

¶ In order that passion work no ill, let us act as if we had only eight days to live.

¶ What is it in us which feels pleasure? Is it the hand, the arm, the flesh, the blood? It will be seen that it must be something immaterial.

¶ Instinct and reason; marks of two natures.

¶ *Contradictions:* (After having shown the baseness and the greatness of man.)—Let man now appraise himself. Let him love himself, for there is within him a nature capable of good; but for all that let him not love the base things which are also within him. Let him distrust himself, for this capacity is empty; but let him not on that account distrust his natural capacity. Let him hate himself, let him love himself: he has within him the capacity of knowing truth and of being happy; but he possesses no truth or anything constant or satisfying.

I would wish, therefore, to induce man to desire truth, to be ready to pursue it dispassionately, whither it may be found, knowing how his enlightenment is bedimmed by his passion; and I would that he hate in himself the concupiscence which leads him, so that it may not blind him in order to dispose his choice, nor hinder him when he shall have made it.

¶ At least let them learn what this religion is which they oppose, before attacking it. If it boasted of having a clear sight of God, and of possessing it openly and uncloaked, they might oppose it by saying that nothing in



the world is seen to show it so clearly. But since, on the contrary, it says that men are in darkness and removed from God, that He is hid from their knowledge, that He is even what He calls Himself in the Scriptures, "*Deus absconditus*," and, in fine, if it labours equally to establish these two things: that God has set perceptible marks in the Church to make Himself recognised by those who seek Him sincerely, and that He has covered them, nevertheless, in such a way that He will be perceived only by them who seek Him with their whole heart,—what advantage can they reap, when, in their professed neglect of the search for truth, they cry that nothing shows it to them, since this obscurity that they are in, to which they object in the Church, can establish only one of the things which it maintains, without touching the other, and establishes its doctrine, so far from destroying it?

In order to attack it, they ought to complain that they have done all they could to seek it everywhere, even in that which the Church offers for their instruction, but without any success. If they spoke in that way they would truly dispute one of its claims. But I hope to show here that there is no reasonable person who can speak in that way; and I dare even say that no one ever has done so. It is well known how people act who are of this mind. They think they have made great efforts to instruct themselves, when they have employed a few hours in the reading of some book of Scripture, and when they have questioned some ecclesiastic on the truths of the faith. After that, they boast of having sought unsuccessfully in books and among men. But in truth, I would say to them what I have often said,—that this negligence is not to be tolerated. It is not a question of a slight interest of some strange person, to be treated in this way; it concerns ourselves and our whole being.

The immortality of the soul is a thing which concerns us so potently and touches us so deeply, that a man who is indifferent to the knowledge of religion must be dead to all feeling. All our thoughts and actions should follow such different lines, according as there will be a hope



of eternal blessings or no, that it is impossible to take any step with sense or judgment except with regard to the consideration of this point, which should be our ultimate object.

Thus our first interest and our first duty is to enlighten ourselves on the subject on which all our condition depends. And this is why, regarding the people who are not persuaded of it, I make a great difference between those who labour with all their might to instruct themselves concerning it, and those who live without troubling or thinking about the matter.

I can have nought but compassion for those who honestly bewail this doubt, who regard it as the last misfortune, and who, sparing nothing in order to be rid of it, make this research their principal and most serious occupation.

But as for those who pass their life without thinking of life's last end, and who, solely because they do not find in themselves the lights which persuade them of it, neglect to seek them elsewhere, and to examine thoroughly if this opinion is of those that the people receive through a credulous simplicity, or of those which, although obscure in themselves, have nevertheless a very solid and unshakable foundation,—I consider them in a wholly different manner.

This apathy in a matter which concerns themselves, their eternity, their all, irritates me more than it softens me; it surprises and affrights me; it is to me a monstrosity. I do not say this from the pious zeal of a spirited devotion. On the contrary, I mean that one should have this feeling from a principle of human interest, and by the interest of self-love: for that it is only necessary to see that which is seen by the least enlightened.

It does not need a very elevated soul to understand that here we have no true and solid satisfaction, that all our pleasures are but vanity, that our ills are infinite, and that at last death, which menaces us at every instant, shall in a few years infallibly put us in the horrible necessity of being either eternally annihilated or eternally miserable.



There is nothing surer than that, nothing more terrible. Play the brave as we will, there is the end which awaits the finest life in the world. Let us reflect upon it, and then say if it is not undeniable that there is no good in this life but the hope of a life to come, that we are happy only in measure as we approach this other life, and that, as there will be no more ills for those who have an entire assurance of eternity, there is also no happiness for those who have no gleam of it.

Surely, therefore, it is a great evil to be in this state of doubt; but at least it is an indispensable duty to seek when in this state of doubt; and thus he who doubts and seeks not is altogether very unfortunate and very wrong. Yet if he be tranquil and satisfied withal, if he make profession of it, and if, in short, he vaunts himself of it, and if he makes it the subject of his joy and his vanity, I have no words to describe so extravagant a creature.

Whence can these sentiments be derived? What source of joy can be found in awaiting nothing but irreparable miseries, what cause of vanity in seeing oneself in impenetrable obscurity? And how can it be that this reasoning passes through the mind of a reasonable man:

“I know not who has put me into the world, or what the world is, or what I myself am. I am in a terrible ignorance of all things. I do not know what my body is, or my senses, or my soul, or even this part of me which thinks that which I am saying, which reflects on everything and on itself, and knows itself no more than the rest. I see these awful spaces of the universe enclosing me, and I find myself attached to one corner of this vast expanse, without being able to know why I am put in this place rather than in another, or why this brief time which is allotted to me for my life is assigned to me at this point rather than another of all the eternity which has preceded me and all which follows me.

“I see only infinities on every side, enclosing me as an atom, and as a shadow which endures but an instant and comes not again. All that I know is that I must soon die, but that of which I am most ignorant is this very death which I am not able to avoid.



“As I know not whence I come, so I know not whither I go; and I only know that in quitting this world I fall for ever, either into nothing, or into the hands of an offended God, without knowing which of these two conditions must be mine eternally. That is my state, full of weakness and uncertainty. And therefrom I conclude that I ought to pass every day of my life without caring to find out what is to happen to me. Possibly I might be able to find some solution of my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, or move a single step to seek it, and afterwards, while treating with contempt those who work to this end” — (whatever certainty they might have of it, it is a subject of despair, rather than of vanity) — “I desire to go, without forethought, and without fear, to try so great an event, and allow myself to be gently conducted to death, in uncertainty of the eternity of my future condition.”

Who would wish to have as a friend a man who talked thus? Who would choose him from among others to communicate his affairs to him? Who would have recourse to him in trouble? And for what use in life could he be designed?

In truth, it is glorious to religion to have as enemies men so unreasonable, and their opposition is so little dangerous to it that, on the contrary, it serves for the establishment of its truths. For the Christian faith goes to establish only these two things: the corruption of nature, and the redemption by Jesus Christ. Now I maintain that if they do not serve to show the truth of the redemption by the sanctity of their morality, at least they serve admirably to show the corruption of nature by sentiments so unnatural.

Nothing is so important to man as his condition; nothing is so fearful to him as eternity. And thus, if there are men indifferent to the loss of their existence and to the peril of an eternity of miseries, it is not at all natural. They are quite otherwise as regards other things: they fear even the slightest, they foresee them, they feel them: and the very man who passes so many days and nights in rage and despair at the loss of a post or at some imag-



ined offence to his honour, is the same who without inquietude or emotion knows that he will lose all by death. It is a monstrous thing to see in the same heart, and at the same time, this sensibility to small things and this strange insensibility to the greatest things. It is an incomprehensible enchantment, and a supernatural lethargy which proves an all-powerful force as the cause.

There must be a strange subversion in man's nature if he glory in being in this condition, in which it seems incredible that a single person could be. Yet experience shows me so many such persons that it would be astonishing, did we not know that the majority of them are disguised and are not such in reality. These are people who have heard it said that the good manners of society consist in thus getting the better of their condition. This is what they call having shaken off the yoke, which they try to imitate. But it would not be difficult to make them understand how they deceive themselves in seeking esteem thereby. This is not the way to acquire esteem, even among men of the world, who judge of things sanely, and who know that the only way to succeed in that is to show oneself honest, judicious, and capable of usefully serving his friend, because men naturally love only that which can be useful to them. Now what advantage is there for us in hearing from a man "that he has therefore shaken off the yoke, that he does not believe that there is a God who watches over his actions, that he considers himself sole master of his conduct, and that he thinks to render no account thereof except to himself?" Does he think thereby to persuade us henceforth to great confidence in him, and to expect from him consolation, counsel, and succour in all the needs of life? Do they claim to have greatly rejoiced us by telling us that they hold that our soul is but a little wind and smoke, and, moreover, by telling us it in a proud and satisfied tone? Is it then a thing to be declaimed gaily? Ought it not, on the contrary, to be spoken sadly, as the saddest thing in the world?

If they thought of it seriously, they would see that it is so ill-conceived, so contrary to good sense, so opposed



to honesty, and so far removed from the fine demeanour they seek, that they would be inclined to correct rather than corrupt those who would have any tendency to follow them. And, indeed, make them give account of their sentiments, and of the reasons they have for doubting religion, and they will tell you things so weak and so base that they will persuade you to the contrary. This was what a person said to them one day, very pertinently: "If you continue to talk in this way," said he, "in truth you will convert me." And he was right, for who would not be horrified to find himself in agreement with people so contemptible?

Thus those who only counterfeit these sentiments would be very unfortunate if they constrained their nature in order to make themselves the most foolish of men. If they regret from the depths of their heart that they are not more enlightened, let them not dissemble it: this declaration will not be shameful. There is no shame except in having none. Nothing attests an extreme weakness of mind more than not to know the unhappiness of a man without God; nothing shows a bad disposition of heart more than not to desire the truth of the eternal promises; nothing is more cowardly than to play the braggart before God. Let them leave these impieties, then, to those of natures sufficiently bad to be really capable of them; let them at least be honest men, if they cannot be Christian; in brief, let them recognise that there are but two sorts of people who can be called reasonable: those who serve God with all their hearts because they know Him, and those who seek Him with all their hearts because they know Him not.

But as for those who live without knowing Him and without seeking Him, they judge themselves so little worthy of their own care that they are not worthy of the care of others, and it is necessary to have all the charity of the religion they despise, in order not to despise them to the extent of abandoning them to their folly. But because this religion requires us always to consider them, as long as they are in this life, as capable of the grace which can enlighten them, and to believe



that in a short time they may be fuller of grace than we are, and that we, on the other hand, may fall into the blindness in which they are, we must do for them that which we would have them do for us were we in their place, and call them to pity themselves and to take at least some steps to try if they cannot find light. Let them give to this reading some of the hours which they spend so uselessly elsewhere; whatever aversion they may have for it, it may be that they will light upon something, and at any rate they will not lose much. But for those who bring to it a perfect sincerity and a real desire to find the truth, I hope that they will have satisfaction, and that they will be convinced by the proofs of a religion so divine, which I have collected here and in which I have nearly followed this order . . .

¶ “This is what I see and what troubles me. I look about me on all sides and see everywhere only obscurity. Nature offers me nothing which is not matter for doubt and disquietude. If I saw nothing which denoted a Divinity, I should decide in the negative. If I saw everywhere marks of a Creator, I should rest in peace in the faith. But seeing too much to deny and too little to convince me, I am in a pitiable condition, in which I have wished a hundred times that, if a God sustain Nature, she might show it unequivocally, and that, if the signs she gives of it are deceptive, she might suppress them entirely; that she say all or nothing, in order that I may see which part I should take. But instead, in the condition I am in, ignorant of what I am and of what I should do, I know neither my condition nor my duty. My heart desires entirely to know where the true good is, in order to follow it. Nothing would be too costly for me to give in exchange for eternity.

“I envy those whom I see in the faith, living so negligently and making such ill use of a gift which it seems to me I should use so differently.”

¶ No other [religion] has recognised that man is the most excellent creature. Some, who have well known the truth of his excellence, have taken the low sentiments



which men naturally have of themselves, for cowardice and ingratitude; and the others, who have well known how effectual is this baseness, have treated with disdainful ridicule these feelings of greatness which also are natural to man.

“Lift up your eyes towards God,” say some; “look at Him whom you resemble, and who has created you to worship Him; you can make yourselves like unto Him; wisdom will raise you up to Him if you will follow her.” (“Lift up your heads, ye free men,” says Epictetus.) And the others say to him, “Cast your eyes upon the ground, wretched worm that you are, and behold the beasts, your companions.”

What, then, shall man become? Shall he be equal to God or to the beasts? What a terrible distance! What, then, shall we be? Who does not see by all that that man has wandered, that he is fallen from his place, that he seeks it unrestingly, that he cannot regain it? And who shall direct him thither? The greatest men have not been able to do it.

€ Imagine a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death, of whom every day some are butchered in sight of the others, those remaining seeing their own fate in that of their fellows, regarding each other with grief and despair while awaiting their turn; this is a picture of the condition of man.

€ What a difference there is between one book and another! I do not wonder that the Greeks have made the *Iliad*, or the Egyptians and Chinese their histories. It is only requisite to see how that has come about. These fabulous historians are not contemporary with the things of which they write. Homer made a romance which he gives as such and which is received as such, for no one doubts that Troy and Agamemnon no more existed than the golden apple. Thus he did not mean to make a history, but only a diversion. He is the only one who wrote of his time: the beauty of the work makes it endure; every one learns it and speaks of it; it is necessary to know it; each knows it by heart. Four hundred years



after an event the witnesses are no longer living: no one any longer knows of his own knowledge whether it is a fable or a history: they have merely learned it of their ancestors: it may pass for true.

All history which is not contemporary is suspicious; thus the books of the Sibyls and of Trismegistus, and so many others which the world has credited, are false, and are false through all time. It is not so with contemporary authors.

There is a great difference between a book made by a private person, which he sends forth among the people, and a book which itself makes a people. It cannot be doubted that in this case the book would be as ancient as the people.

¶ Without feeling there is no misery: a ruined house is not miserable, it is only man who is so. "*Ego vir videns . . .*"

¶ They blaspheme that of which they are ignorant. The Christian religion consists of two things. It is as important for man to know them as it is dangerous for him to ignore them, and it is equally part of God's mercy to have given tokens of both.

And yet they take occasion to conclude that one of these points does not exist because of this which ought to make them infer the other—that the sages who have said that there is only one God, have been persecuted, the Jews have been hated, and the Christians hated and persecuted yet more.

Their natural knowledge has shown them that if there is a true religion in the world the order of everything ought to tend thereto as to its centre; the ordering of all things ought to have in view the establishment and the greatness of religion; men should have within them sentiments conformable to those it imparts to us, and, in short, that it should so be the object and centre to which all things tend, that whosoever shall know its principles may give account of all human nature in particular, and of all the government of the world in general.



And on this ground they take occasion to blaspheme the Christian religion because they are ill-acquainted with it. They imagine it to consist simply of the adoration of a God looked upon as great and powerful and eternal, which, properly speaking, is deism, almost as far removed from the Christian religion as atheism, which is wholly contrary thereto. And thence they conclude that this religion is not true, because they do not see that all things concur in establishing this point,—that God does not manifest Himself to men with all the evidence that He might do.

But let them from this conclude what they will against deism,—they will conclude from it nothing against the Christian religion, which properly consists of the mystery of the Redeemer, who, uniting in Himself the two natures, the human and the divine, has drawn men away from the corruption of sin to reconcile them to God in His own divine Person.

It therefore teaches to men both these truths,—that there is a God, to whom men may attain, and that there is a corruption of nature which renders them unworthy of Him. It is important to men to know both these points equally, and it is as dangerous for man to know God without knowing his misery, as to know his misery without the Redeemer who can cure him of it. The knowledge of one of these alone makes either the pride of the philosophers, who have known God and not their misery, or the despair of the atheists, who have known their misery and not their Redeemer.

And thus, just as it is a necessity for man to know these two things, so it pertains to God's mercy to have acquainted us therewith. The Christian religion does so; it is in this that she consists.

Let the order of the world be examined in this light, and let it be seen whether all things do not make for the establishment of the two heads of this religion. Jesus Christ is the object of all, and the centre to which all tend. Whoso knows Him knows the reason of all things.

Those who err, err only for lack of seeing one of these two truths. Therefore a man can indeed know God



without his misery, and his misery without God: but he cannot know Jesus Christ without knowing at once both God and his misery.

And this is why I shall not undertake here to prove by natural reasons either the existence of God, or the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul or any things of this nature, not only because I do not consider myself strong enough to find in nature the wherewithal to convince hardened atheists, but also because this knowledge, without Jesus Christ, is useless and barren. If a man should be persuaded that the proportions of numbers are immaterial and eternal truths, and dependent on an original truth in which they subsist, and which is called God, I should not consider him much advanced towards his salvation.

The God of Christians is not simply a God who is the author of geometrical truths and the order of the elements: this is the concern of pagans and epicureans. He is not only a God who exercises His providence over the life and goods of men, to give a happy succession of years to those who worship Him: this was the concern of the Jews. But the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Christians, is a God of love and consolation; He is a God who fills the soul and the heart of those who are His; a God who makes them feel within them their own misery and His infinite mercy; who unites Himself to the innermost parts of their soul, who fills it with humility, with joy, with confidence, with love; who makes them incapable of any other object than Himself.

All those who seek God except through Jesus Christ, and who get no farther than nature, either find no knowledge which satisfies them, or they arrive at a means of knowing God and serving Him without a mediator; and thereby they fall, either into atheism or into deism, which are the two things which the Christian religion abhors almost equally.

Without Jesus Christ the world would not exist; it would have either to cease to exist, or to become like a hell.

If the world existed to instruct man of God, His



divinity would shine forth from it on all sides in an incontestable manner; but, as it exists only by Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, and to acquaint men with their corruption and their redemption, everything in it glows with proofs of these two truths. What appears there betokens neither the total exclusion of divinity nor its manifest presence, but the presence of a God who hides Himself: all bears this character.

¶ It is a wonderful thing that no canonical author has ever made use of nature in order to prove God. They all aim at belief in Him: David, Solomon, etc., have never said, "There is no vacuum, therefore there is a God." They must have been cleverer than the cleverest men who have come since, who have all employed it. That is very important.

¶ The pursuit of glory is man's greatest baseness, but it is also the greatest mark of his excellence, for whatever worldly possessions he may have, whatever health and essential commodities he may enjoy, he is not satisfied unless he is esteemed by his fellows. He has so high an opinion of human judgment, that, whatever his worldly advantages, if he is not placed equally advantageously with regard to this judgment, he is not content. It is the finest position in the world: nothing can turn him from this desire, which is the most ineffaceable quality in the human heart. And those who most despise men, and compare them to beasts, will yet desire to be admired and believed by them, and belie themselves by their own sentiment; for their nature, which is stronger than everything else, convinces them of the greatness of man more forcibly than their reason persuades them of his baseness.

¶ Religion is so great a thing that it is right that those who would not take the trouble to seek it, if it is obscure, be deprived of it. Of what, then, do they complain, if it is such that it may be found by searching for it?

¶ Pride counterbalances and removes all miseries. There is a strange anomaly and palpable error! Behold man



fallen from his place: he seeks it anxiously! It is what all men are doing: let us see who shall have found it.

¶ *Proof:* 1. The Christian religion by its establishment: by itself established so firmly, so mildly, being so contrary to nature. 2. The sanctity, the loftiness, the humility of a Christian soul. 3. The marvels of Holy Scripture. 4. Jesus Christ in particular. 5. The apostles in particular. 6. Moses and the prophets in particular. 7. The Jewish people. 8. The prophecies. 9. Perpetuity: no religion has perpetuity. 10. Doctrine, which gives account of all. 11. The sanctity of this law. 12. By the ordering of the world.

After this, it is undeniable that, in considering what is life and what this religion, we ought not to refuse to obey the inclination to follow it, if it come into our heart; and it is certain that there is no occasion to deride those who do follow it.

¶ Justice is that which is established; and thus all our established laws will necessarily be held just without examination, since they are established.

¶ What is the "I?" If a man put himself at the window to see the passers-by, and I pass along, can I say that he has put himself there to see me? No, for he is not thinking of me in particular. But he who loves any one for his beauty, does he love him? No, for the small-pox, which kills beauty without killing the person, will make him love him no more. And if any one loves me for my judgment or my memory, does he love me, myself? No, for I can lose these qualities without losing myself. Where, then, is this "I," if it is neither in the body nor in the mind? And how shall we love the body or the mind, if not for these qualities which, nevertheless, are not that which makes ME, since they are perishable? For should we love the substance of the mind of a person, in the abstract, whatever qualities might be there? That is impossible, and would be unjust. Therefore we never love a person, but only qualities. Then let not those who make themselves honoured in order to obtain charges



and offices, be derided, for we love no one except for borrowed qualities.

¶ Original sin is foolishness in the sight of men, but it is given for such. Therefore you should not reproach me for the want of reason in this doctrine, since I offer it as being without reason. But this folly is wiser than all the wisdom of men, "*Sapientius est hominibus.*" For, without it, what could we say that man is? His whole condition depends on this imperceptible point. And how should it be perceived by his reason, since it is a thing contrary to reason, and since his reason, so far from reaching it by paths of its own, withdraws when confronted with it?

¶ All the great diversions are dangerous to the Christian life, but among all that the world has invented there is none so much to be feared as the play. It is so natural and so fine a representation of the passions, that it arouses them and generates them with us, especially that of love,—principally when it is represented as very chaste and upright. For the more innocent it appears to the innocent, then more likely are they to be affected by it. Its violence pleases our self-love, which immediately forms a desire to produce the same effects which we see so well represented; and at the same time we make ourselves a conscience founded on the integrity of the sentiments we behold there, which remove the apprehension of the pure, who imagine that it does not injure purity to love with a love which appears to them so wise. Thus we leave the play with the heart so filled with all the beauties and the sweetness of love, and the soul and mind so persuaded of its innocence, that we are quite prepared to receive its first impressions, or rather to seek occasion to make them take rise in the heart of another, in order to receive the same pleasure and the same sacrifices as we have seen so well depicted in the play.

¶ As the only object of peace in the State is the safe preservation of the people's goods, so the only object of peace in the Church is to keep in security the truth



which is her property, and the treasure upon which her heart is set. And as it would be against the welfare of the peace to allow the enemy to enter and pillage the State, without opposition, for fear of causing disturbance (because peace being just and useful only for the security of property, it becomes unjust and pernicious when it allows security to be lost, and the war which can defend it becomes both just and necessary); so, in the Church, when truth is assaulted by the enemies of the faith, when they would snatch it from the hearts of the faithful and replace it by error,—to remain in peace then, would it be to serve the Church or to betray her, to defend her or to ruin her? And is it not plain that as it is a crime to disturb peace when truth reigns, it is also a crime to keep peace when virtue is being destroyed? There is a time, therefore, when peace is right, and another when it is wrong. And it is written that “there is a time for peace and a time for war,” and it is the interest of the truth which discerns these times. But there is not a time for truth and a time for error, and it is written, on the contrary, that “the truth of the Lord endureth for ever”; and this is why Jesus Christ, who says that He is come to bring peace, says also that He is come to send war; but He does not say that He is come to bring truth and falsehood. Truth, therefore, is the first rule and the ultimate end of things.

¶ M. de Roannez said, “The reasons come to me afterwards, but, to begin with, the thing pleases or displeases me without my knowing the reason, and yet it displeases me for this reason that I do not discern till afterwards.” But I believe that it does not displease by the reasons which are discovered afterwards, but that we find these reasons because it displeases.

¶ The most unreasonable things in the world become the most reasonable because of the unruliness of men. What is there less reasonable than to choose to govern a State the eldest son of a queen? We do not choose to steer a boat him of the voyagers who is of the highest birth: this law would be ridiculous and unjust. But



because they are so and will always be so, they become reasonable and just, for whom shall we choose? The most virtuous and able? Then at once we come to blows: each one claims to be the most virtuous and able. Let us then attach this quality to something which cannot be contested. This is the king's eldest son: it is a fact, there is no disputing it. Reason cannot do better, for civil war is the greatest of evils.

¶ *Self-love*: It is the nature of self-love, this human "I," to love and consider itself alone. But what can it do? It cannot save the beloved object from faults and miseries: it would be great, and it is small; it would be happy, and it is wretched; it would be perfect, and it is full of imperfections; it would be the object of human love and esteem, and it sees that its faults merit only aversion and distrust. This difficulty in which it finds itself produces in it the most unjust and criminal passion that can be imagined, for it conceives a mortal hatred against that truth which rebukes it and convinces it of its faults. It would annihilate it, and unable to destroy truth itself, it destroys it as far as possible, in its own knowledge and in that of others,—that is to say, by using great care to hide its faults, both from others and from itself; and it cannot bear to be made to see these faults itself, or that they should be seen by others.

Doubtless it is an affliction to be full of faults, but it is a yet greater affliction to be full of them and not to wish to be cognisant of it, for that is to add to them again the fault of a voluntary illusion. We do not wish to be deceived by others; we do not consider it right if they desire us to esteem them more than they deserve: therefore, it is not right that we should deceive them, and wish that they should esteem us more than we deserve.

Thus, when they merely disclose our real imperfections and vices, it is obvious that they do us no wrong, since they are not the cause thereof, but a service, since they help us to deliver ourselves from an evil,—that is, the ignorance of these imperfections. We should not regret that they know them, and that they despise us;



it is right that they should know us for what we are, and despise us, if we be despicable.

Those are the sentiments which should rise in a heart which wishes to be full of equity and justice. What, then, ought we to say of our own, seeing there quite a contrary disposition? For is it not true that we hate the truth and those who tell us the truth, and that we like them to deceive ourselves in our favour, and that we wish to be considered something different from what we really are?

Here is a proof of this which horrifies me. The Catholic religion does not oblige us to reveal our sins to every one indiscriminately: it permits us to remain hidden from all other men, excepting one to whom it commands us to reveal the depths of our hearts, and to show ourselves as we are. There is only this one in the world whom it orders us to undeceive, and it binds him to inviolable secrecy, making his knowledge concerning us as if it did not exist. Can anything milder and so charitable be imagined? And nevertheless, human corruption is such that it finds even this law hard, and it is one of the principal reasons which have made a great part of Europe revolt against the Church.

How unjust and unreasonable is the human heart, to take it aniss that it is obliged to do with regard to one man that which would be just, in some way, to do with regard to every man! For is it right to deceive?

There are different degrees of this aversion from truth, but it may be said that it exists in some degree in all men, because it is inseparable from self-love. It is this false delicacy which obliges those who have to rebuke others to choose so many ways and means to avoid shocking them. They have to belittle our faults, that they may make an appearance of excusing them, and to introduce praises and testimonies of affection and esteem. Notwithstanding, this medicine still remains bitter to self-love. It takes as little of it as possible, and always with disgust, and often even with a secret spite against those who present it.

It thus happens, that if any one has an interest in being



beloved by us, he is averse from rendering a service which he knows to be disagreeable to us, but treats us as we wish to be treated; we hate the truth,—he hides it from us; we wish to be flattered,—he flatters us; we like to be deceived,—he deceives us.

It is this that makes every step of good fortune which raises us in the world to remove us farther from the truth, because people are afraid to wound those whose favour is useful and whose enmity is dangerous. A prince may be the laughing-stock of all Europe, and he alone know nothing of it. I am not surprised at this: to speak the truth is useful to those to whom it is spoken, but disadvantageous to those who speak it, because it makes them hated. And those who live with princes love their own interests better than those of the prince they serve, and thus they do not care to procure for him an advantage so hurtful to themselves.

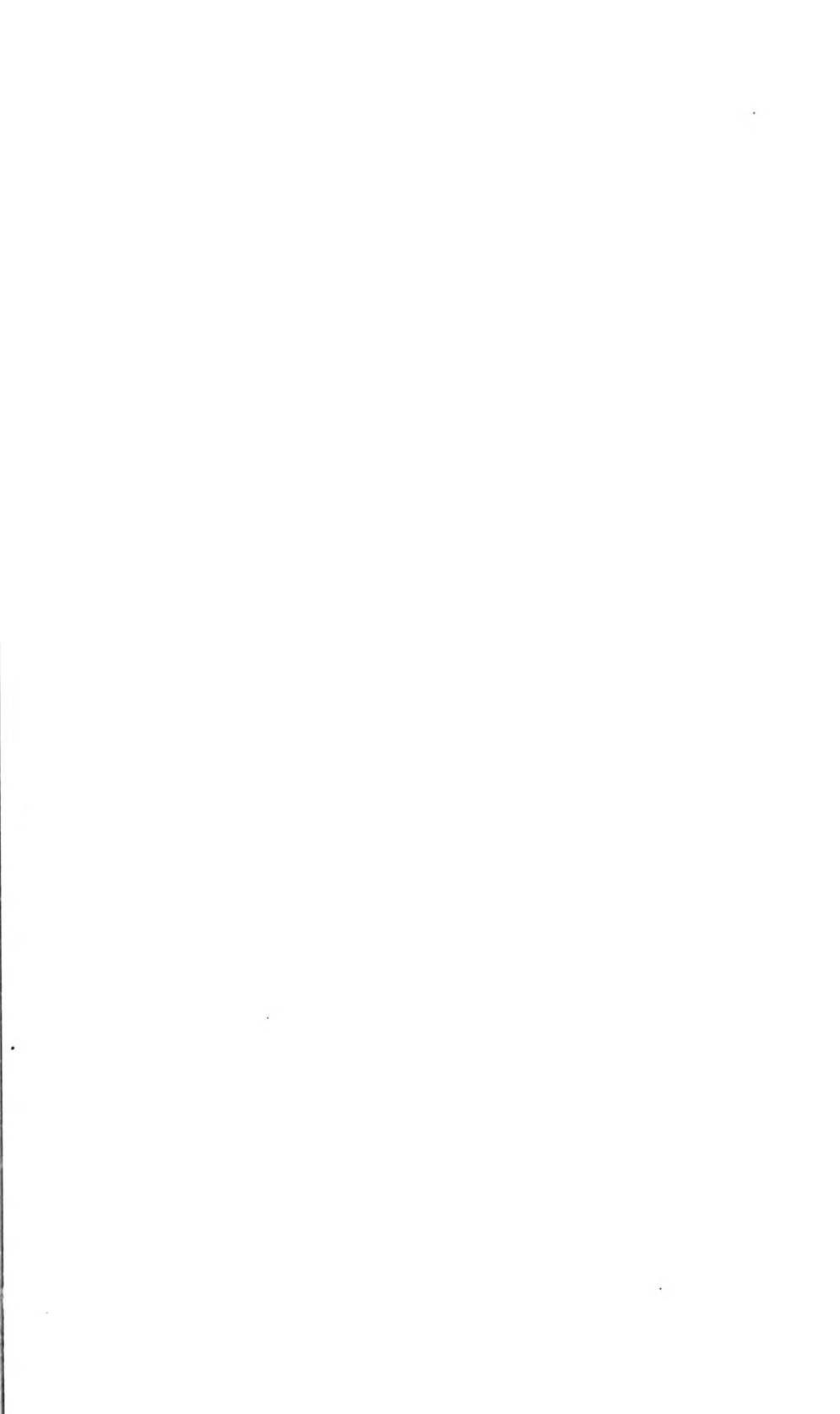
This misfortune is without doubt greater and more frequent in the higher ranks, but the lower are not exempt from it, because it is always to our own interest to make ourselves beloved by men. Thus human life is but a perpetual illusion; we work nothing but mutual deception and flattery. No one speaks of us in our presence as he does in our absence. Unity among men is founded only on this mutual deception, and few friendships would survive if each knew what his friend said of him in his absence, even though he then speaks of him sincerely and dispassionately.

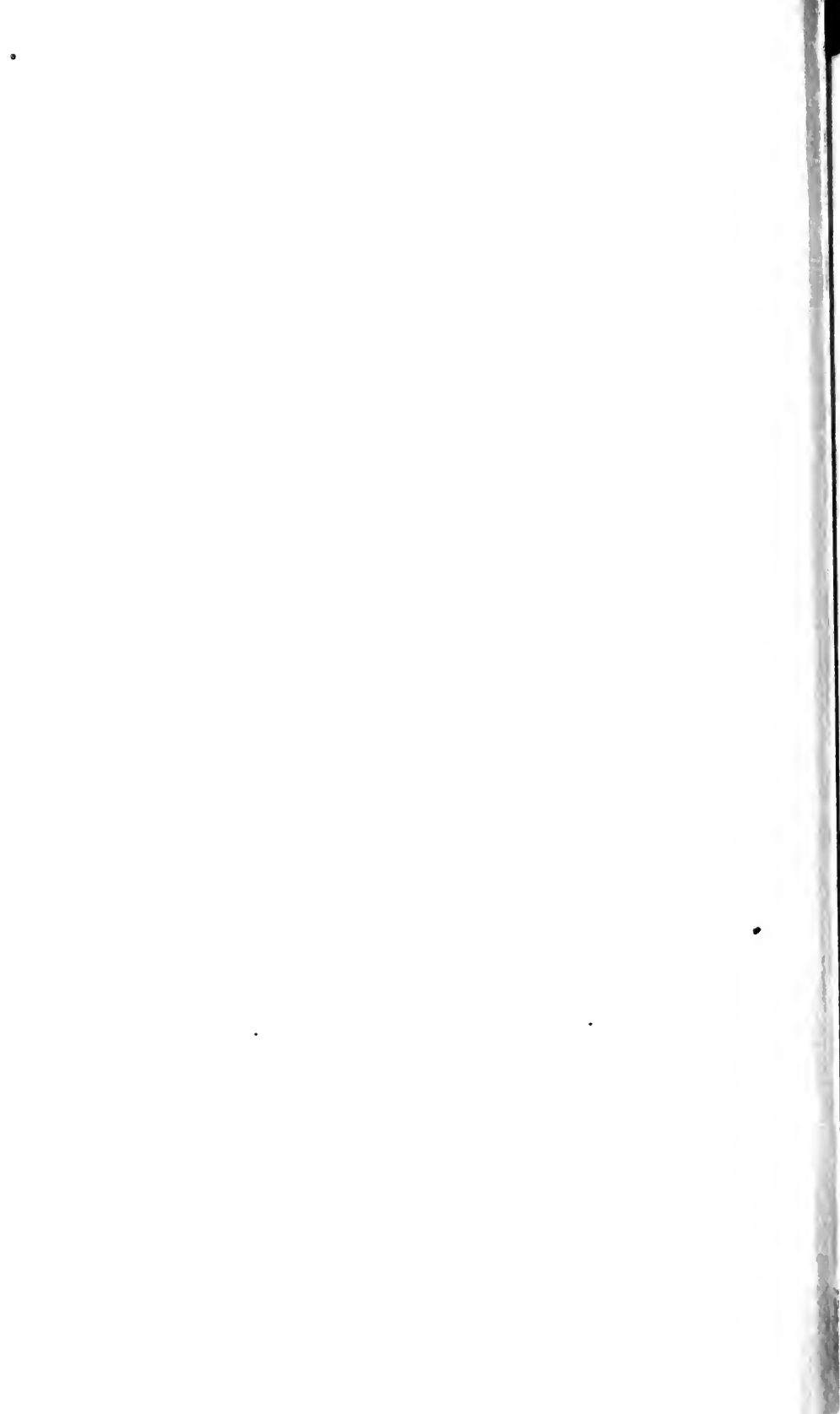
Man, then, is nothing but dissimulation, lying and hypocrisy, both within himself and with regard to those about him. He does not wish to be told the truth; he avoids telling it to others; and all these tendencies, so far removed from right and reason, are naturally rooted in his heart.



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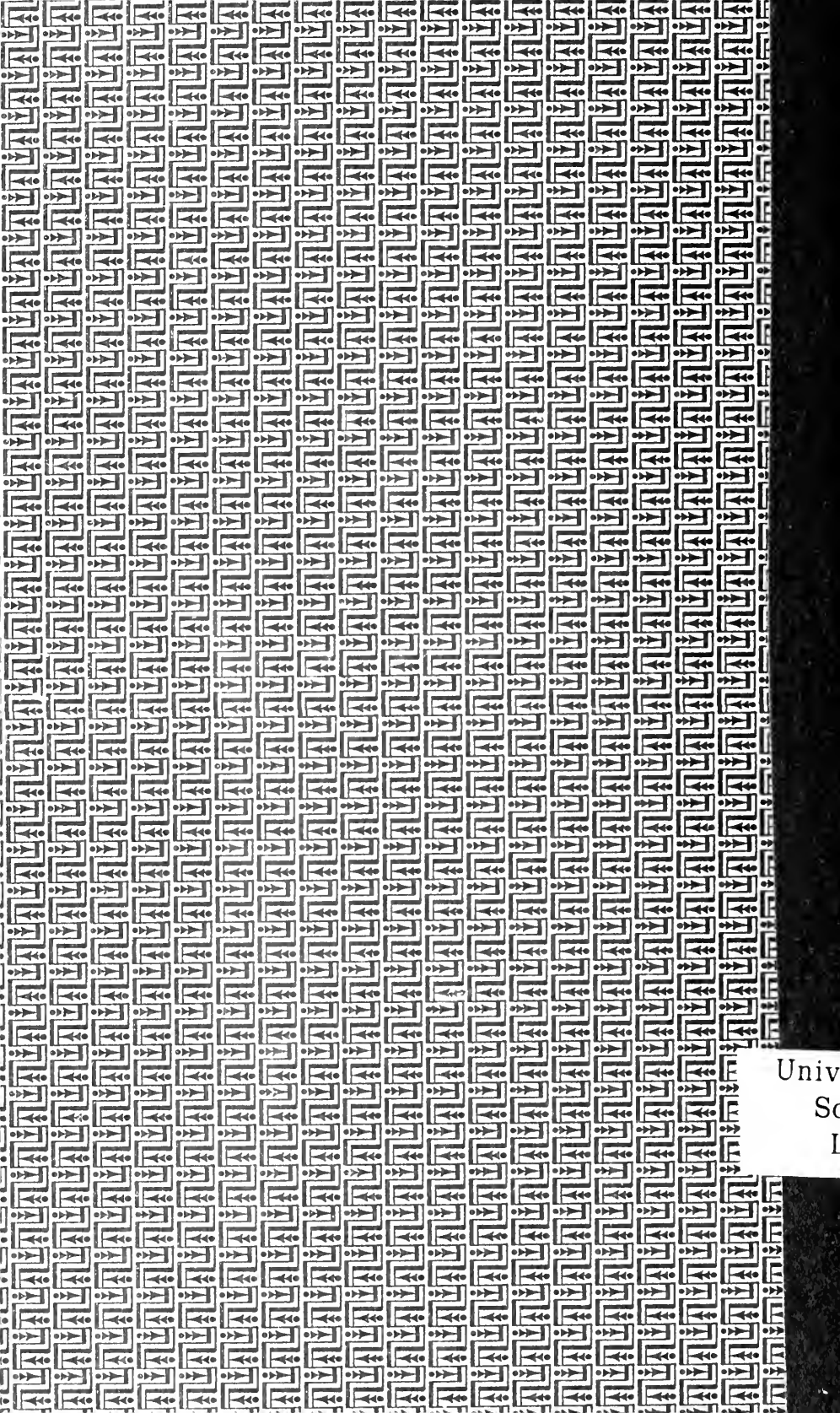
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